ELSIE DINSMORE ON THE LOOSE

by JOSIE TURNER

drawings by

ELDON KELLEY

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To H. W. R. and K. S. W.
of the New Yorker,
who have in the past
returned good for evil

PREFACE

This little book was written, *not* for any selfish, vainglorious, or monetary considerations, but in order to satisfy the deep-rooted conviction of the author, that the great American people *need* the beautiful teachings exemplified in the Elsie Dinsmore books of Martha Finley, and will therefore accept this humble attempt to follow in the footsteps of that great mistress of English prose. May the moral lessons herein inscribed serve as an inspiration to all who peruse these pages.

Josie Turner

For permission to reprint stories which have appeared in the New Yorker *the author wishes to thank the editors of that magazine.*

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Sweet thoughts can never die,
Though, like the flowers,
Their brightest hues may fly
In wintry hours.
— From Day-School Bell.

I

SUBMISSION

I'll do whate'er thou wilt, I'll be silent;
But oh! a reined tongue, and a bursting heart
Are hard at once to bear.

J. Baillie.

ONE beautiful morning, little Elsie Dinsmore was just finishing her duties, — for although the Dinsmore household in New York embraced a large and efficient staff of colored servants, Elsie was building her character by performing certain daily tasks which might almost have been considered too menial by one less simple and unaffected in outlook.

Our heroine was of about average height, and graceful as a young faun. Strangers pronounced her beautiful, and commented upon her large, dark eyes, her dusky hair, and her fair, soft skin. But far from being vain, the little girl had no coquettish arts; she

was straightforward and true, respectful to superiors and kind to inferiors and equals.

"I have fed the goldfish, and emptied the ice-box pan," said she with characteristic gaiety to Mammy Chloe, who was following her nursling about the house, to prevent the child's overtaxing her strength. "And now, Mammy Chloe, if you will fetch the green enamelled watering-pot, which dear, kind Mr. Travilla presented to me, I shall water the rubber plants."

"'Deed I will, li'l missus," replied the darkey, in her quaint dialect, "I'se only a po' ole brack sinnah, but I'se pleased to do anything fo' you, honey chile." So saying, the aged nurse suited the action to the word, and brought the watering-pot full of water, with which Elsie laved the thirsty roots of the handsome conservatory plants.

"Now I have finished," said Elsie, a smile of well-merited satisfaction overspreading every feature.

"Praise de Lawd!" exclaimed Mammy Chloe fervently. "Angel chile, is yo' pappy gwine make you have yo' lessons today?" The wrinkled black face betrayed the speaker's anxious concern.

Elsie's eyes flashed angrily for a moment. "My own dear Papa never *makes* me have lessons," she cried. "I am always thankful to have the opportunity

of acquiring knowledge. I am never happier than when studying." But, seeing the old darkey's downcast countenance, she softened. "Truly, Mammy Chloe, the lessons are not harmful, but very helpful in improving my mind and character. I should not have spoken so heatedly to you, for I realize that you do not comprehend."

With these words, the little girl blew a kiss to her faithful servant, and skipped off to the schoolroom.

"Good morning, Miss Bliss," she said kindly to her governess, a good-hearted woman of middle-age, whose devotion was in marked contrast to the cruelty of a former governess.

"Good morning, Elsie," was the reply of the preceptress, who was sitting at her desk beside the window. "Your father has just sent word that there will be no lessons today, for he wishes to speak with you."

"Dear, dear Papa!" exclaimed Elsie, her eyes misting at the thought of one so precious to her. "Although I am indeed sorry to miss my lessons and your instructive companionship, Miss Bliss, I am always pleased when dear Papa allows me extra time with him."

The child set out in search of her father, finding him in his study, his handsome head bent over copies of several fashionable periodicals. Elsie glided softly

across the room, and laid her little white hand on his sleeve, looking lovingly into his face with a pair of soft, dark eyes. He looked up and smiled fondly at the little one who had clung about his neck since early childhood, and whose affection for him had increased a hundredfold with the rolling years.

"Elsie, my child," he said, smoothing her glossy, curling locks, "I have been mulling over the question for some time. Our intimate friend, Mr. Travilla, has also repeatedly expressed his views on the subject. My conclusion is that you are now advanced enough in years to commence to learn something of the manners and customs of the social world in which you are to move."

"Oh! Papa," cried Elsie, her eyes sparkling, "are you planning for me another trip to Europe, a course in reading, or an intensive tour of the art galleries?"

Mr. Horace Dinsmore shook his head. "No, daughter," he said gravely. "Up to the present your education has been somewhat one-sided; that is, it has been confined to literature, the beaux arts, and other branches of the humanities. Now I propose to develop the social side of your nature, by introducing you into my circle of friends."

"Oh, my own dear Papa," exclaimed Elsie, in momentary excitement, "that will be capital. Shall I no

longer sit alone at home while you are moving in society? Shall I be allowed to stay out late, as you do? Your friends must indeed be jolly, Papa, for when you come home you are always so exhilarated. I shall enjoy meeting such merry companions."

"Spoken like my own little girl," said Mr. Dinsmore, patting her cheek. "I am gratified that you take so reasonable an attitude. It is my wish, Elsie, to make a fashionable woman of you, and to cure you of some of the absurd and narrow notions of your unfortunate early training."

"Dear Papa," said the little girl earnestly, "I gladly comply in your every wish, so long as it does not go contrary to the dictates of my conscience. I hope that you do not intend to turn my feet aside into the paths of worldly conformity and sin."

Her father looked displeased, and frowned slightly. "I trust that you will make no difficulties, daughter. I do not bid you do violence to your conscience; but when I see fit to educate you according to your station in life, it is my duty to require ready and cheerful obedience, and yours to yield it. For, as you know, my child, you have no ordinary heritage, and you are the possessor of $45,000,000 in your own name, bequeathed to you by your mother, who died at your birth."

"Oh, Papa! I did not *dream* that I was so wealthy. Is that not pleasant?" she said in her own simple, child-like way. "Although I do not worship Mammon, I am glad to own so large a sum with which to do good deeds. Dear Papa, how much money have *you?*"

Her father hesitated, flushing slightly. "I have about $6,000,000," he said finally.

Elsie's eyes filled with tears, and her little face was much graver than its wont. "Oh, Papa," she said, in a touched tone, "why have I so much more than you?"

"Because, my child," he answered slowly, "as your earthly father, I have always done my best to render the most faithful stewardship; I have invested your money to the utmost advantage. I have perhaps been less astute in handling my *own* money, for although I am engaged in a lucrative business, I have met with severe losses from time to time."

"I know," said Elsie, nodding with a wisdom beyond her years. "I remember the occasion of the theatrical production called 'Mamie's Kisses,' which proved to be a poor investment for you. At that time, I overheard a remark of Mr. Eugene Thigpen's; I did not mean to eavesdrop, but I was glad that I

heard, for he said that you were an angel, Papa. I thought that a very fitting description."

"What a flatterer my daughter can show herself to be!" said Mr. Horace Dinsmore, with a slightly embarrassed laugh. "But let us say no more of my losses. Let us rather turn our thoughts to the problem at hand — that of teaching you to behave as a well-poised young woman. I shall from time to time secure invitations for you, which will be to your advantage. But they must never interfere with your lessons and your music."

"Oh! no, Papa," said Elsie firmly. "Nothing can cause me to neglect my duties and accomplishments."

"Very well," said her father, with a gratified smile. "Now run along, and practice your scales, my child."

This conversation was held when the little girl was fourteen years old, and was, as you may guess, dear reader, just budding into lovely womanhood. We shall see in the following chapters what came of Mr. Horace Dinsmore's decision, and how our little Elsie benefitted by her early training, which was not so unfortunate as her father might have thought.

II

GRATITUDE

Since this world is vain and volatile and fleet,
Why should I lay up earthly joys,
Where rust corrupts and moths destroy,
And cares and sorrows eat?

ANON.

"FIRST of all, Elsie," said Mr. Dinsmore in high spirits, on the following afternoon, "your wardrobe should be replenished with a view to your future activities. I have absented myself from my business office in order to attend to the matter."

"How good of you, Papa," said the little girl joyfully. "My attire is always quite elegant, thanks to your splendid taste and generosity; and of course I am not at all vain of my personal appearance, which is a gift of God and not due to any virtue or excellence of character on my part. But if it will give you pleas-

ure for me to have new clothes, I shall accept them without a murmur."

"It *will* give me pleasure," he replied firmly. "I insist that you accompany me this afternoon to a certain shop on Fifth Avenue, in which I am told that charming frocks are exhibited on models in an interesting way."

"At what hour shall we depart?" asked Elsie, making no attempt to conceal her readiness to obey her father.

"As soon as you can prepare yourself, daughter," he answered. "Now go and get your cloak and hood. And do not forget to bring your cheque book."

The child lost no time, and was soon costumed appropriately for Fifth Avenue. No sooner had she rejoined her father downstairs than aged black Uncle Ajax drew up at the curb in the Dinsmore limousine. Mr. Dinsmore and Elsie seated themselves comfortably on the luxurious cushions of the automobile, and they were off.

As they proceeded downtown from their Park Avenue home toward the shopping district, Elsie diffidently plucked her father's sleeve. "Dear Papa," she said, blushing, "perhaps it is not fitting that I should speak of such things to you, but I must inform you that my greatest need is for new lingerie."

"I excuse your mentioning such things to me," replied her father kindly, "because, as your father, I have a right to know all the details of your life, and I love to be made the confidant of my little girl's joys, sorrows, and needs. But under the present circumstances, I deem it more meet for Mammy Chloe to make such purchases for you. We have other business today."

"As you wish, Papa," replied Elsie trustingly. "I shall be grateful for anything you choose to buy for me."

"By the by, Elsie," said Mr. Dinsmore hurriedly, "I presume that you have brought your blank cheques."

"Of *course*, Papa," she said, and his face cheered.

Their progress along the great thoroughfare was slow, owing to the number of vehicles moving up and down the avenue. As the traffic signal stopped their automobile opposite a confectioner's shop, Elsie called her father's attention to the unusually tempting display of sweetmeats in the window.

"See, Papa, how *very* nice those candies look!" she said, with interest.

He smiled a little, asking, "Which do you think looks the most inviting?"

"I do not know, Papa," she replied, in perplexity, "for there is such a variety."

Giving a signal to Ajax to halt at the curb, he said, "Although our mission today is to procure clothes, I will indulge you for once, — it is not often that I do, although it is a great pleasure to me to gratify you in any harmless wish."

So saying, he alighted from the limousine and assisted her to step down to the sidewalk.

"Choose what you want, and I will pay for it," he said, leading her into the store.

"Thank you, Papa!" and the smile that accompanied the words was a very bright one. She joyfully availed herself of his permission, saying, "I think I should like yon large box adorned with pink ribbon." And she pointed to an imposing package on the counter.

Her father frowned. "My dear child," he expostulated, "are you aware that you have chosen the most costly article in the entire shop? Would not half a pound of gum drops be better for your health?"

"Perhaps you are right, dear Papa," said Elsie, with humility. "I did not mean to make a suggestion which appeared *forward*."

And so the little girl's adored father, who was but eighteen years older than his child, having married at

an early age, presented her with a bag of the choicest gum drops, which she received with touching gratitude.

So exhilarated was she by this episode, proving as it did her father's continual generosity and solicitude, that more than once during the remainder of the ride her low, silvery laugh rang out, musical as a chime of bells.

As they drew up at the entrance to an exclusive gown shop, she clapped her hands delightedly, and said, "Oh! I have never been here before! What a treat it will be, Papa!"

Once inside the shop, they were greeted by a handsome woman of distinguished mien, who said, "Ah! Monsieur Dinsmore! Again so soon!"

Mr. Dinsmore coughed loudly, at which his little daughter exclaimed in concern, "Oh, Papa! I *do* hope you are not contracting consumption!"

"This is Madame Hélène, Elsie," interrupted her father quickly. "My small daughter, Madame. I wish to purchase an outfit for her."

"Oui, Monsieur," Madame replied in French, as Elsie dropped a graceful courtesy to her.

"May I offer you a sweetmeat, Madame?" said Elsie politely, holding out her bag of gum drops.

"Merci, ma chère," said Madame Hélène, smil-

ing, "mais non. And now will you come this way?" With these words, she led the Dinsmores into a tastefully furnished room, at one end of which was a species of platform. "Is Mademoiselle interested in dresses, Monsieur?"

"Such, I think, is her preference," replied Mr. Dinsmore genially.

"If you please, Papa," pleaded Elsie eagerly, but in a low tone meant only for his ears, "I should like *so* much to have a new hat adorned with ostrich, and a velvet pelisse trimmed with costly fur, for as you know, the autumn season is approaching." Her tone was very coaxing, and her eyes implored as earnestly as her tongue.

He seemed to be considering for a moment, and she watched his face intently, trying to read in it what his answer would be. At length it came, gently, but firmly spoken, "No, daughter, I do not approve."

"Oh, Papa," was all that Elsie could say. She did not utter another word, of remonstrance or entreaty, for she knew that it would be useless; but the disappointment was very great, and two or three tears rolled quickly down her cheeks.

Her father looked at her a moment in some surprise, and then said, speaking in a low tone and very gravely, "This will never do, my daughter. You are

entirely too old to indulge in such babyish performances. Did I suggest buying you a hat and coat? "

"No, dear Papa," she answered contritely, drying her tears with her spotless pocket handkerchief. "I was wrong to make a suggestion. Forgive me, dear Papa. I shall be happy no matter what you buy me."

"That, Elsie," he said, in a gratified tone, "is a better spirit in which to receive gifts. Madame, bring on the models with evening dresses, such as — such as I understand you provide."

Madame looked slightly puzzled, glancing at Elsie, but was reassured by a nod from Mr. Dinsmore. She then bowed and retired from the room. A moment later, several beautiful young ladies commenced to glide across the platform before our friends, garbed in the most fashionable dresses.

"How pretty! " sprang simultaneously from the lips of Mr. Dinsmore and Elsie, as one young lady appeared. She had fair skin and golden locks, and was arrayed in a low-cut gown of green velvet, which seemed quite to captivate the little girl's handsome father.

"But, Papa," asked Elsie in bewilderment, "can it be that you will allow me to wear such gowns? Should I not sew a guimpe into each dress before wearing it? "

"These are not suitable for one of your tender age and upbringing," he said decidedly.

"Then, dear Papa, why are we viewing them?" she asked, in a tone of sweet simplicity and innocence, in which there was no shade of rebuke.

"Elsie!" said Mr. Dinsmore in the exceedingly stern and severe tone that always silenced the child at once. "Do you *dare* to criticize your father? Are you implying that I lack either wisdom or love?"

"I do not know, Papa," replied the little girl, hanging her pretty head and blushing deeply; "I *do* know that I am sorry and ashamed to have spoken thus."

"And well you may be," he said rigorously. "I should be very happy if my little girl could learn to trust me so entirely that she would always be satisfied with my decisions — always believe that my reasons are good and sufficient, even without having them explained."

"I do believe it, Papa," she murmured. "I shall not be naughty again. Please forgive me, dear Papa."

"I do forgive you freely, my little one," he said generously; "and now hearken to my words. I wish to see dresses of all styles, even the most unsuitable, so that I shall know whence the mode is trending. I want to be assured that whatever I buy for you is

of the most fashionable material and cut, however modified for your use."

Little Elsie then felt deeply mortified that she had for one moment doubted her father's judgment. Unshed tears choked her utterance, but the little arm stole round his neck, and the eyes seemed to ask forgiveness and reconciliation once more.

As Madame Hélène entered the room again and took a seat beside them, Mr. Dinsmore gave Elsie a smile that told her that she was restored to his good graces. The little heart bounded lightly once more, and the sweet little face was wreathed in smiles.

"Madame," said her father, turning to the Frenchwoman, "let us see more evening gowns on the blonde model."

"Oui, Monsieur," she replied, smiling, and she gave an order to an assistant.

And so, with happy Elsie beside him, Mr. Horace Dinsmore studied the fashions, as they were exhibited by the beautiful blonde model. He sat, arms folded, watching her intently, as she promenaded again and again across the platform, each time wearing a different gown — satins, moires, brocades, velvets, chiffons, all of richest hue and most unusual design. Sometimes, during intermissions, he gave a long sigh,

which betrayed his preoccupation with the matter at hand.

Finally he roused himself out of the rêverie into which he had fallen, and said, "Did you not speak of underwear, daughter?"

Elsie, almost speechless with joy because her father had remembered the request which she had made so early in the afternoon, said with blushing face and beating heart, "Yes, Papa, dear."

He turned to Madame Hélène. "Madame," said he, "negligées, pyjama suits, and underwear on the blonde model."

"Oui, Monseiur Dinsmore," she replied, with unvarying courtesy, hastening to inform the assistants of his wish.

Garment after garment, as worn by the model, filmy and perishable though they were, aroused Mr. Dinsmore from his reflective mood, and excited him to the most extravagant praise.

"Never," he said emphatically, "have I observed a more charming display!"

"Nor I, Papa," chimed in Elsie, her eyes upon the articles of apparel in which the beautiful model was clad.

When the young lady appeared in a pyjama suit of Nile green georgette crêpe, Mr. Dinsmore's en-

thusiasm knew no bounds. "Completely ravishing!" he commented warmly. "Madame Hélène, what is the price of this costume?"

"Six hundred dollars, Monsieur," she replied modestly. "A very reasonable sum for so exclusive a garment."

"I shall purchase it, let the price be what it will," he announced decidedly, taking out his cheque book.

"For *me*, Papa?" asked Elsie, with bated breath, tremulous with joy.

"Of course not, child," he replied shortly. "You are too young. Besides, of what use is such a costume to *you?* I shall make a gift of it to the blonde model, as a slight token of our appreciation of her untiring services."

"Always generous, my own dear Papa," said Elsie in glowing terms. "I shall be more pleased for the young lady to have the pyjamas than to own them myself, for oh! I *like* to be unselfish."

"It is very kind of you, Monsieur Dinsmore," said Madame Hélène, who had heard the entire conversation, "and I am sure that the gift will be fully appreciated by Miss de la St. Claire, — for that is the young lady's name."

At this moment, the tuneful notes of chimes rang out, and Mr. Dinsmore glanced at his handsome gold

"Never," said Horace Dinsmore emphatically, "have I observed a more charming display!"

watch, which he had inherited from his grandfather.

"Hark!" he said, "the clock is but just striking five. We must be going, Elsie. I have devoted enough time to the question of your wardrobe."

"I am sure, Papa," said the child gratefully, "that I shall never give you cause to regret your solicitude in my behalf."

They then rose and proceeded toward the door, Madame Hélène accompanying them in her official capacity.

"Now, Elsie," said Mr. Dinsmore in a low tone, motioning the child toward the exit from the shop, "I want you to thank Madame Hélène for her kindness, while I, for my part, shall speak with Miss de la St. Claire. And mind that you pay strict attention to Madame while you are conversing with her."

III

TEMPERANCE

I never saw an eye so bright,
And yet so soft as hers;
It sometimes swam in liquid light,
And sometimes swam in tears.

MRS. WELBY.

"NOW, Elsie," said the child's father kindly, on one day early in September, "under my direction you have attended quite properly to your duties, and, in addition, manifested a willingness to learn *savoir faire*. I therefore intend to further your education and also reward your diligence by taking you with me to visit Mr. and Mrs. Albert Birtwhistle at their estate, Oaklands-on-the-Hudson."

"Oh, that will be *jolly!*" said Elsie, a dewy light shining in her large, dark eyes. Then her expression changed to one of deepest concern. "I *do* hope that I shall not disgrace you, Papa."

"I am of the same hope," he replied gravely; "however, we shall soon see how well you can comport yourself in social circles."

After this conversation, little Elsie spent many happy days in anticipation of the journey, and she could talk of very little else, versatile conversationalist though she generally was. Every day, when she had finished her duties, she would run lightly to her room and engage in the task of packing her portmanteau, with the fond assistance of Mammy Chloe. It was difficult for even so active a brain as Elsie's to decide which of her many garments to take with her, and which portraits of her loved ones.

It seemed to her that time moved much more slowly than usual, but finally the great day dawned. It was a Saturday, and the sun shone down benevolently upon the handsome mansion which housed Mr. Dinsmore and Elsie. In the afternoon, Uncle Ajax carried the child's portmanteau and her father's Gladstone to the limousine, our two friends seated themselves on the rear seat, and the automobile with its precious load sped to the railway station.

Once upon the train, which was not long in coming, Mr. Dinsmore chose a comfortable seat in the cars, and then spoke to Elsie in confidential tones, ex-

plaining that although he had thoughtfully provided himself with a ticket to give to the conductor, he had been able to procure none for her. "I should advise you, under the circumstances, daughter, to wait in the women's room yonder until the official has gone his rounds, — say, half an hour hence."

The little girl, with a bright smile of perfect confidence, said, "Dear Papa, I shall obey willingly, for I know that you are always right. It does not enter my head to question your authority."

"Yes, yes," said her father hastily, "but waste no time, daughter. I think I perceive the conductor in the far end of the car."

Little Elsie gladly passed the next half hour in the women's room, happy in the conviction that she was sacrificing her own comfort to do right. She interested herself with examining carefully the appurtenances of the room, and was astounded to discover butts of cigarettes in the receptacle marked "Hair"; but in a trice she had found the explanation. "Oh," she remarked in a half-tone, "the porter has but recently tidied up the car, and has forgot to remove the evidence of his slavery to a filthy habit."

When the specified period of time had elapsed, Elsie issued forth from her retreat, and rejoined her father with ill-concealed satisfaction.

"Oh, Papa," cried the little girl, rushing up to embrace him tenderly, "I am *so* glad to see you again."

Mr. Dinsmore looked unutterable things. "Daughter," he said severely, "have you not observed that I am engaged in a friendly conversation with yon young lady across the aisle? Why do you interrupt?"

Elsie looked from her father's glowering face to the lovely countenance of the young lady toward whom he gesticulated. At first, the child was downcast at his rebuke, which she well knew was justified; then the sunshine broke through the clouds on her fair face.

"Oh, Papa," she said, with inspiration, "I grasp the meaning of the lesson which you wish me to learn. Is it not that I, too, can display a friendly interest in my fellow-passengers, and assist them to pass the time pleasantly?" Her father looked relieved that she had so readily understood him, whereupon she continued, "I shall set about accomplishing it at once, for I do *so* enjoy doing kind deeds."

So saying, the little girl began to make the rounds of the railway car, chatting gaily with all the passengers in her attempt to make each one feel at ease. Need we say, dear reader, that our Elsie made a profound impression on all? It was with a sigh of regret

and a tearful good-bye to her new friends that she greeted her father's announcement that the end of the journey was at hand.

At their destination, they were met by a liveried chauffeur in an automobile of superior performance and outstanding beauty.

"How do you do?" said Elsie to the chauffeur, in her pretty belief that servants, no matter how humble, were God's creatures like herself.

Mr. Dinsmore smiled faintly, but said nothing, while the chauffeur touched his cap courteously. Entering the motor car, father and daughter were driven off, experiencing exhilaration in the indescribably smooth, effortless performance of the vehicle. Almost before they realized, they were entering the long driveway of Oaklands-on-the-Hudson, which was an elegant country-seat, situated directly on the river front.

Elsie had only time to exclaim, "Are we indeed here, Papa?" before the motor car had stopped, and her father, springing out very lightly for a man of his size and strength, was ready to assist her to alight.

They were warmly welcomed by Mr. and Mrs. Albert Birtwhistle, their host and hostess. Elsie thought him a kind, pleasant-looking gentleman, and Mrs. Birtwhistle had a gentle, winning address that quite

took the child's fancy. Both were evidently pleased at the arrival of the Dinsmores, and anxious to entertain them in the most hospitable manner.

"Is it hot enough for you?" asked Mr. Birtwhistle interestedly, as they mounted the steps to the piazza.

"Oh, yes," replied Elsie, in her gracious way. "It is not for *us* to criticize the weather God has given us, *is* it, Mr. Birtwhistle?"

Mr. Birtwhistle coughed explosively, and his wife broke in hastily, "Now, Bert, if you will show Horace to his room, I will see that little Miss Elsie is made to feel at home. Will you come with me, Elsie?"

"Indeed, I will, Mrs. Birtwhistle, for I place implicit confidence in Papa's friends," said the child, giving her hand to her hostess.

She was led to the room which she was to occupy during her week-end visit. It was a large, airy apartment, very prettily furnished, leading into a well-appointed bathroom.

"I should like," said Elsie hesitantly, though she disliked to speak of such matters before an acquaintance of short standing, "to bathe and dress, if you have no objections; for, as you may readily see, I am very cleanly in my habits."

"I have none at all, child," said Mrs. Birtwhistle

kindly, and with a quick glance about, to make sure that everything was in order, she left the room.

Half an hour later, Elsie, much refreshed by her bath and change of clothing, started downstairs. She had not quite reached the end of the hall when she saw her father emerging from another room. She ran to him, and, catching hold of his hand, looked up eagerly into his face, saying, "Oh, Papa, are not the Birtwhistles pleasant?"

"Quite," he made genial reply. Then, peering sharply into the child's face, "You look better, daughter. Have you bathed?"

"Yes, dear Papa," she answered, blushing. "I think it improves anyone to get the dust washed off."

They descended the stairs together, and joined their friends in the tastefully furnished living-room.

"How sweet and cool you look, Elsie," was Mrs. Birtwhistle's comment. "Does she not, Horace?"

Mr. Dinsmore looked slightly displeased, for he disapproved of flattery, which might produce conceit in the innocent little breast. Noticing his expression of face, Mrs. Birtwhistle added quickly, "Shall we repair to the lawn? It is so delightful to have tea out of doors."

They found the outside air balmy and delightful, as they strolled down the cool green alleys to a choice

spot near the river's brink, where they established themselves in comfortable wicker chairs. A soft breeze played with Elsie's curls and gently ruffled the leafy branches overhead. It was indeed a charming scene.

A bright-cheeked maid in uniform came tripping across the spacious lawn, bearing a tray full of glasses, bottles, oranges, and in addition a handsome silver beverage shaker. At the sight, every heart leaped lightly, every face was wreathed in smiles.

"If you will squeeze the oranges, Horace," directed Mrs. Birtwhistle in her gentle way, "little Elsie can pour the contents of this bottle into the container. Then if you will shake the mixture, it will be ready for consumption. Bert will, as usual, supervise."

Elsie watched this operation with a great deal of interest, after she had done as she was told. Soon it was finished, the glasses were filled and passed, and our friends sipped the refreshing beverage as they enjoyed the beauty of the scenery. The river flowed past in calm grandeur, rippling gently against its banks.

"I *like* Orange Pekoe," said Elsie, passing her glass for a second helping, in her attempt to express her appreciation of the hospitality of the Birtwhistles. "And I can truthfully say that I am very favorably impressed with dear Papa's friends, although I do not yet know them well."

All laughed merrily at her sweet remark, for they were in excellent spirits.

"Shall I, Horace?" asked Mr. Birtwhistle tentatively, holding the container poised over Elsie's glass.

"Why not, indeed?" said Mr. Dinsmore, still smiling. "I wish the little girl to learn to behave as a woman of the world."

Mr. Birtwhistle then refilled Elsie's glass, and also the others. After this courteous act, the entire company became very gay.

"Oh, Horace," said Mrs. Birtwhistle enthusiastically, "I heard some good stories yesterday at my bridge club, which I am sure you will like. Shall I tell them?"

Mr. Horace Dinsmore's face grew stern. "Elsie is present," he said. "I prefer that she shall read her stories in the classics."

"Please, dear Papa," pleaded the child, her expressive eyes upon his face, "I have read all the classics, and I should like to hear some new stories."

"Not another word!" thundered her father, moving over to sit down beside Mrs. Birtwhistle, with whom he commenced to converse in low, confidential tones, punctuated from time to time with jolly laughter and apprehensive glances toward Elsie.

Our tender-hearted, sensitive heroine, in the mean-

while, sat silent, large tears rolling quickly down her fresh cheeks. She was saddened by this rebuke from her dear father. But, a few moments later, her host made the little girl quite happy by thoughtfully refilling her glass. The kindness of the act and the pleasing taste of the cool drink quite revived her sinking heart.

At length, the pretty maid approached them to announce dinner. Mr. Dinsmore at once arose and followed her into the house, and was nowhere in sight when the others reached the dining-room. He reappeared later, followed shortly by the maid, who was to serve the repast.

"Oh," exclaimed Elsie, gazing at the girl, "how prettily she is blushing!"

"S-s-sh!" said Mr. Dinsmore, and the maid blushed more prettily than ever.

Elsie was pleased to note the interest with which her father regarded the girl during dinner. "Dear Papa is even as I am," she thought to herself. "He too appreciates beauty, even in servants."

After dinner, it was again suggested that they sit upon the lawn, for the full moon was shedding its silvery beams upon the landscape in an indescribable way. They had been chatting only a short time when they were joined by Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Grey, whose estate adjoined Oaklands-on-the-Hudson.

"Hello, hello," cried Mr. and Mrs. Grey, strolling across the dewy grass. "Who is here?"

Formal introductions were made, and the newcomers sat down, to enjoy the pleasant company and the moonlit scene.

"Bert," said Mrs. Birtwhistle in an aside, "*do* run into the house and prepare the two large shakers."

The words fell softly, but Mr. Dinsmore caught them. Springing to his feet with alacrity, he said, "I shall accompany you, Bert, to fetch the glasses."

"Oh, no, Horace," protested the host, "I can manage easily."

"I *insist*," said courteous Mr. Dinsmore firmly.

The two gentlemen moved toward the house, and were soon lost to sight in the shadows. After a time, Mr. Birtwhistle reappeared, carrying a large tray, on which were the two beverage shakers and half a dozen glasses.

"Why, where is Papa?" asked Elsie in astonishment.

"Why — ah — he is in the kitchen," replied Mr. Birtwhistle guardedly.

"Assisting the maid to clean up the orange peels, I presume," said Mrs. Birtwhistle, laughing.

"How well you know my dear, thoughtful Papa,"

said Elsie admiringly. "Is he not *always* considerate and kind?"

"Let us have a drink at once," said her host hastily, proceeding to fill all the glasses.

Mr. Dinsmore quietly returned, just in time to receive his share; and soon the party was as merry as it had been in the afternoon. After a second glassful, Mr. Grey began to sing "Sweet Adeline" in his full tenor, to which Mr. Dinsmore added his deep, rich bass notes, and Mr. Birtwhistle his baritone.

"Shall we sing the song we learned at Eugene Thigpen's last week?" said Mr. Grey.

"It is better not," said Mr. Dinsmore regretfully.

"I have an idea," exclaimed Mr. Grey, and he leaned over to whisper in the ear of his spouse, who nodded.

"Are you fond of children?" she asked, turning to Elsie.

"Indeed, yes," said the little girl, "for have they not equal chances of salvation with the rest of us?"

"Shall I show you mine?" offered Mrs. Grey.

Elsie eagerly accepted the invitation, and was led across the great lawn and through a gap in the hedge. Being a little uncertain of her footsteps in the darkness, the child found it advisable to grasp the hand of her guide. When they entered the Grey's home, Elsie

was so dazzled by the lights that she hardly knew in what manner she and Mrs. Grey reached the nursery on the second floor.

Here they found the courteous nurse patiently reading by the dim glow of the night-light, and near by, the two cribs where nestled the children. In the first, lay little May, a beautiful child of four with flaxen curls, whose chubby cheeks were flushed with sleep.

"Alas," breathed Elsie, unsteady with emotion, "she little recks what sin and sorrow lie in store for her."

"And this is my Archibald, aged eight months," whispered Mrs. Grey, leading Elsie to the other crib.

When they bent over it, the babe in its cozy nest stirred and opened its blue eyes with a little "Coo, coo."

"What dear, pretty little things!" exclaimed Elsie, eyeing the infant. "Are they twins?"

Mrs. Grey glanced at her sharply, as the maid tittered. "Here, child," she said. "Take my hand. I think we had best return to your father."

"Oh, yes," said Elsie, on the way downstairs, "it has been *so* long since I have seen Papa. I look forward to his company."

As they strolled back across the lawn, they could hear the voices of the three men, blended in perfect harmony. They were singing a song which ran, "In fourteen hundred ninety-two, in a town in old Italie." But as Elsie and Mrs. Harvey Grey approached, some of the words became indistinct.

"Oh, Papa," said the little girl, taking a seat once more, "do you not know the words of this song? Why do you mumble so many of them?"

"It is, my child," answered Mr. Dinsmore guardedly, "an old folk ballad, of which no one knows *all* the words."

The singers paused for breath, whereupon Elsie, whose late reserve had fled, said, in her wish to contribute to the entertainment of the group, "Shall I, too, sing, Papa?"

"If you so desire, daughter," he replied kindly.

Availing herself of the permission, she began in her sweet treble:

Jesus wants me for a sunbeam,
To shine for him each day . . .

And then she sang the second verse, which commenced:

Jesus wants me to be loving,
And kind in every way . . .

When she had finished, Mr. Birtwhistle remarked humorously, "Horace, if she does as the song bids, she will indeed become a woman of the world."

"I should be glad also to play 'Traumerei' or 'To a Wild Rose' for you, if I had my music," said Elsie modestly. "Although, of course, I am only a little girl and do not play very well yet."

The others hastened to say that they were sorry that she had not brought her music. "We have no music in the house, either," added Mrs. Birtwhistle quickly.

"Nor have we," emended Mrs. Grey.

"Ah, well," said the child regretfully. "Another time."

At this moment, Mr. Horace Dinsmore took them by surprise, for it became obvious that he had fallen asleep in his chair.

"My always kind and indulgent Papa!" said Elsie solicitously. "He works so hard and so long at the office. When he comes home late, he often drops into slumber before retiring to his room."

Mr. Birtwhistle laughed aloud. "Have another glass of fruit juice, Miss Elsie," he said.

Always polite, Elsie received the proffered refreshment eagerly and with hearty thanks. But as she raised

the glass to her lips, her father slid from his chair and fell upon the ground, without waking. Elsie rose, her glass untouched, and so overwrought were the child's feelings that everything seemed to be turning round, and for an instant she scarcely knew where she was. She succeeded, however, in reaching her father's side, and sat down upon the grass.

"The younger generation," she said in her sweet, silvery tones, stroking his forehead gently, "is not entirely evil. Thus, you see, I am much concerned over my Papa's condition; I realize my responsibilities. The trouble with many young people of today is, as I have learned from my reading, that they are the worse for liquor. If there was none of the accursed thing on the face of the earth, we might hope for their redemption. Or if they could live in the sweet and pure moral atmosphere of such a home as mine, there would be no temptation." The voice almost broke down with the last words, and there was a moment of silence in which her heart was going up in earnest prayer for the fallen souls. Then she remembered her father.

"Oh, Papa," she sobbed, tears raining down her cheeks, as she shook his shoulders convulsively, "awake and assure your little daughter that you were not injured by your fall. Tell me that

you are still alive, that you have not passed out into the land of spirits. Oh, Papa, my own darling Papa! "

"God help me!" cried Mr. Dinsmore, opening his eyes and staggering to his feet.

"He will, dear Papa," said Elsie gravely.

And, sure enough, God did help Mr. Dinsmore, for he found his own room safely. And with Elsie's words ringing in their ears, the Greys departed, and the others betook themselves to their respective rooms. Soon quiet descended upon the Birtwhistle household, and the moon peeping through the windows saw our friends sleeping heavily, breathing deeply of the fresh country air.

It was with a start, and a momentary feeling of perplexity as to her whereabouts, followed almost instantly by the glad remembrance that she was indeed visiting the Birtwhistles, that our little heroine awoke the next morning. She sat up in the bed and gazed about her. Everything had an air of simple elegance which struck her as very charming.

Then, as she glanced at her handsome watch, a gift from Mr. Edward Travilla, her heart fell, for it was afternoon, and she realized that it was too late for morning services. She dressed hurriedly, choking back the tears, and ran downstairs into the living-

room, where she found Mrs. Birtwhistle, who was a trifle pale after the previous night's merry-making.

"Oh, Mrs. Birtwhistle," cried Elsie, "having overslept, I have missed Holy Worship. What shall I do?"

"Oh," reassured her hostess, "there is a Holy Roller church nearby. Had you been awake, you would have missed hearing none of their services from the room in which you slept."

"Then it was *just* the same as if I had been in the church," said Elsie, brightening. "Of course, it is not *my* church, but perhaps God will understand."

"I am sure you have no cause for worry," said Mrs. Birtwhistle, smiling.

Soon Mr. Birtwhistle and Mr. Dinsmore made their appearance, and a light meal of coffee and fruit was served. Afterward, when the four friends were all sitting in the living-room drinking ice water, Mr. Birtwhistle glanced at his watch.

"Well, well!" he said cheerily, "it is time for tea again. Shall we have a snort to pick us up?"

"Precisely what we need," exclaimed Mrs. Birtwhistle and Mr. Dinsmore in unison.

But Elsie, feeling no need for Orange Pekoe so soon after breakfast, suddenly remembered the ice-

box pan, the goldfish, and the rubber plants at home, of which she now reminded her father.

"Come, come," said Mr. Dinsmore, in vexation. "Cannot we send word for Pompey or Ajax to perform the tasks in your place?"

"I know, Papa," said Elsie gently, "but it is my *duty* to let no day slip past without laboring, even the Sabbath. For God does not take it amiss when we labor for the good of the little creatures and plants entrusted to our care. I have *promised*, Papa, and a promise is a promise, whether made to a humble black servant or to a crowned head."

"Very well, daughter. I see that you refuse to take a reasonable attitude," said her father, a little pettishly. "We shall take our departure at once."

Midst the bustle of gathering up their belongings and making their farewells, Mr. Dinsmore smiled and excused himself, with an amiable wink at Mr. Birtwhistle. A moment later, Elsie, glancing into a mirror in the hallway, saw the reflection of her father engaged in kissing the pretty maid goodbye.

"Dear Papa!" she said, looking highly gratified. "He is thanking the maid for being so kind to us during our week-end visit."

IV

CHARITY

The golden rule, the golden rule,
Oh, that's the rule for me;
Were this the law for all the world,
How happy we should be.

ANON.

"ELSIE," said Mr. Horace Dinsmore, one evening as he and his daughter and their handsome and intimate friend Mr. Edward Travilla were sitting in the spacious living-room of the Dinsmore town-house, "Mr. Travilla has suggested that we attend a night club this evening, and I am inclined to accept the suggestion."

Elsie's sweet face clouded, and tears rose to her eyes, as she viewed the prospect of losing the company of her father and dear Mr. Travilla; but she pluckily wiped away the falling drops and said, with simple truthfulness, "I hope with all my heart that you have an enjoyable evening."

"But I think we shall take you with us," said her father reassuringly, "as another step in your education."

"Yes, *do*, Mr. Travilla; *do*, Papa," came in eager tones from Elsie. "I am sure that I should profit by such a lesson."

And so the three, Mr. Dinsmore and Mr. Travilla in well-fitting evening dress, and little Elsie in her charming frock of blue mulle, soon found themselves seated at a corner table amid the sparkle of a fashionable night club in the fifties. The scene reminded Elsie of fairy-land, with the soft, glowing lights, the palpitating music, the well-dressed guests and the hurrying waiters. She watched with great interest the graceful dancers who crowded the floor, for she admired skill and aptitude, wherever found.

"Travilla," remarked Mr. Dinsmore, assuming an air of comic gravity, "did you not feel the cold as we rode down here?"

"Why," said Mr. Travilla, in some surprise, "I was under the impression that the night air was unusually balmy for November."

"*I* thought the weather frosty and uncertain," said Mr. Dinsmore reproachfully. "In short, Travilla, I am contemplating taking a precaution against catching cold from exposure."

"Now that you mention it," said Mr. Travilla, in his cheerful, hearty way, "I *did* notice that the weather is dangerous. I do not care if I join you."

"Oh! Papa," broke in Elsie timidly, "the prescription on the bottle reads, 'One tablespoonful every six hours,' and it is scarcely one hour since you took half a glassful. Is it not perilous thus to disregard the physician's instructions?"

"What do you mean by meddling with my affairs in this way?" asked her father sternly, fixing her with his eye.

A crimson tide swept over the fair face and neck. Our little Elsie was indeed mortified, for her generous solicitude had appeared to be disrespectful chiding.

"*Dear* Papa!" she cried, with heartfelt emotion, in which no resentment was mingled, "I did not intend to interfere. I only wanted to be assured that you were not taking grave risks."

"Do you indeed love your father, or *not?*" questioned Mr. Dinsmore in a hurt tone.

"I *do*, Papa, oh! indeed I do," the little girl replied brokenly.

"Then do not attempt to dictate to me," he said forbiddingly, "especially when you see me making every effort to recover my health for your sake, —

for that reason alone prompts me to follow the doctor's prescription. Listen to me, daughter. If one tablespoonful every six hours is curative, are not larger doses at lesser intervals of time far more beneficial? "

Elsie was stung to the quick, and lowered her long lashes in shame. " Yes, Papa," she murmured.

" I am sure that my little friend meant no harm or disrespect, Dinsmore," spoke Mr. Travilla gently, signalling for a waiter. " So let us drop the subject and make haste to take our medicine."

" Will you forgive me, dear Papa? " pleaded Elsie, with a beating heart, near to tears.

" I excuse you on condition that you are not again guilty of such a breach of good manners, daughter," said Mr. Dinsmore, his face softening slightly. The hard expression left entirely as the waiter brought several bottles of charged water and a number of glasses. Smiling almost genially, the handsome father poured out two precautions and added charged water to each glass.

" Will not little Elsie take cold, too? " asked Mr. Travilla, reaching for his precaution.

" Oh! *no,* dear Mr. Travilla," said Elsie proudly, glancing at her father. " Although I am not robust, I have a splendid constitution, and *seldom* have

colds. And, besides, I do not care greatly for medicines."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Mr. Travilla, in his jolly way.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Horace Dinsmore, nettled. "It is hardly important whether you care for medicines or not, Elsie. The question is rather whether you *need* them. I insist that as a punishment —"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Mr. Travilla. "She does not care for —"

"— As a punishment for offering an unsolicited opinion," continued Mr. Dinsmore, frowning at Mr. Travilla, "I insist that you take a precaution at once. And I hope that there will be no murmuring on your part."

"No, Papa," said Elsie meekly. "You know best. Perhaps I *should* take cold without medicine."

As she drank the precaution with her wonted fortitude, she felt that her health was indeed improved; and when her distinguished-looking father smiled upon her again, her heart sang for happiness.

The orchestra, which had been resting for a few moments, now struck the opening chords of a popular waltz. "Miss Elsie," said Mr. Travilla respectfully, "will you give me the honor of dancing with me?"

"I should be delighted, Mr. Travilla," said the little girl graciously. She rose and skipped into the middle of the dance floor, whereupon her father scowled, followed her, and brushed aside her dance partner.

"Why are you skipping about in that mad fashion, Elsie?" he asked angrily. "I believe you will never learn to move and act like a lady."

"I will *try*, indeed," answered Elsie, subsiding into a slow and steady gait which would not have disgraced a woman of any age; "but I was so glad that you love me, that I could not help skipping."

"I wish you to be at ease in public," said her father, less sternly, "but not hoydenish. You may dance now."

While Elsie and Mr. Travilla danced, a perfectly matched pair, Mr. Dinsmore made his way among the tables toward a beautiful blonde lady, who was none other than Miss de la St. Claire. She had been sitting alone, and so after finishing the dance with her, Mr. Dinsmore conducted her to his table.

As Elsie and Mr. Travilla returned, the little girl's father rose gracefully, and said, "Miss de la St. Claire, may I present Mr. Travilla? I believe you have met my little daughter Elsie."

"Hello, everybody!" greeted Miss de la St.

Claire, as Mr. Travilla bowed and the child courtesied.

"Oh! Papa," exclaimed Elsie delightedly, "it is the beautiful young lady to whom you — "

"S-s-sh! " warned her father. "The music is about to begin."

"What a charming daughter you have, Hor — Mr. Dinsmore," said the young lady warmly.

"Is she not? " agreed Mr. Travilla heartily.

"Oh, Papa," said Elsie, in her pretty confusion at finding herself the object of admiration, "what a beautiful necklace Miss de la St. Claire is wearing! "

"S-s-sh! " said her father, flushing. "How many times have I told you that personal comments are in poor taste? "

"By the way," said Miss de la St. Claire, in an immeasurably sad tone, "only today I saw a *darling* coat on Fifth Avenue. It was priced at *only* $5,000, but now that I have left my position, I am far too poor to buy it. My old mink coat is a mere rag, for I have worn it since February. A lonely girl does have *such* a time making ends meet." Tears started from her violet eyes, and her lip trembled.

A sympathizing tear stole down Elsie's cheek, for such a confession deeply affected her tender heart, unaccustomed as she was to poverty.

As Elsie and Mr. Travilla returned, the little girl's father rose gracefully, and said, "Miss de la St. Claire, may I present Mr. Travilla? I believe you have met my little daughter Elsie."

"Dear Papa," she said, laying her little hand on her father's strong arm, "I see that God has given me an opportunity to do good. May I not sacrifice my music lessons so that we may present the coat to Miss de la St. Claire?"

"Such unconscious innocence!" the young lady murmured, throwing up her white and jewelled hands, as she watched Elsie with a half-incredulous smile.

"I deem it hardly necessary, Elsie," said Mr. Dinsmore shortly.

"But she needs the garment, Papa," said Elsie seriously, "and a gift is worth more if it entails a great sacrifice."

"I have said *no*," her father insisted.

At these words, Miss de la St. Claire frowned slightly, and, fingering her necklace, gazed first at Mr. Dinsmore and then at his little daughter. Mr. Dinsmore's face crimsoned slightly, his eyes upon the necklace.

"Upon further consideration," he remarked, almost in ill-humor, "I believe that I shall feel more satisfied if I give you the coat, Miss de la St. Claire. Allow me to write a cheque."

No sooner said than done. The young lady received the slip of paper with a pleased smile, threw her arms

about Mr. Dinsmore's neck, and kissed him in gratitude. Little Elsie followed her example, for, although *she* had wished to make the present, she was happy to waive the privilege in favor of her father.

"It makes me *so* happy," she said to Miss de la St. Claire, "to see that dear Papa is just as generous to other young girls as he is to his own little daughter."

"Somebody," said Mr. Dinsmore nervously, "has created a draught by opening a door. I feel the need of a large precaution at once, as I am quite chilly."

When he had poured out a dose of the medicine, Miss de la St. Claire remarked gaily, "I, too, am susceptible to draughts. May I have a little of the liquid?"

"Come, let us all drink to one another's health!" exclaimed Mr. Travilla heartily.

"What a beautiful spirit in which to take medicine, Mr. Travilla," commented Elsie, with an affectionate glance in his direction.

All lifted their glasses and smiled; and Mr. Travilla's unselfish sentiment lent a touching aspect to the ceremony of drinking.

"What good music they play here!" said Miss de la St. Claire cheerily.

"Speaking of music," broke in Mr. Travilla, "you should hear little Miss Elsie sing."

"She *shall* sing," said Mr. Dinsmore, clapping him on the back. "She shall sing at once."

"Oh! Papa," said Elsie, while the color rushed over her face, and then instantly faded away again, leaving her deathly pale, "not *here*. I *could* not sing before so many people, for my voice is not yet perfect. *Please* excuse me."

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed impatiently. "You sang willingly enough at the Birtwhistles. Why these qualms? Sing!"

Elsie, trembling, weeping, and sobbing, shook her head.

"Daughter," said her father sternly, "let us have no more of these babyish propensities. I cannot yield my authority. I *must* have obedience from you. A bird that *can* sing, and will *not* sing, must be *made* to sing."

"Stay, Dinsmore," said Mr. Travilla, already regretting his well-meant suggestion, "let her be. Do not force her, at her tender age." His kind heart was really pained that he had precipitated so unfortunate a situation.

"Travilla," said Mr. Horace Dinsmore, almost haughtily, "she has a spice of my own obstinacy in her nature, and must be moulded to my will. *Give up* to her? Never! Travilla, it astonishes me that you could suggest such a thing!"

"If you please, Mr. Travilla, I know that you meant no harm by asking Papa not to insist; but I like to be ruled by him," said the little girl, whose sweet disposition was the fruit of a work of grace in her heart. "If he will still allow me, I should like to cast aside my own feelings and trembling fears, and do as he says in the matter of singing."

Without a word, but with a gratified look, Mr. Dinsmore poured out large precautions for everyone in the party. Elsie drank hers, and, strangely enough, the terror which had shaken her left her breast, and the delicate bloom returned to her cheeks. And such, dear reader, is, in greater or less degree, the feeling of every renewed heart.

Still unsteady with emotion, but happy in the conviction that she was doing right and pleasing her father, Elsie waited until the orchestra had for the moment stopped playing, and then rose to her feet. As the sweet, childish voice rang out, the great hall fell silent, and every eye was riveted on the little girl's face.

I've reached the land of corn and wine,
And all its riches freely mine;
Here shines undimm'd one blissful day,
For all my night has pass'd away.

And she began the chorus:

Oh, Beulah land, sweet Beulah land,
As on thy highest mount I stand —

But she got no further than this, for her voice was drowned in cheers and applause. Even the waiters, accustomed though they were to public performances, applauded enthusiastically.

"A beautiful sentiment," exclaimed Mr. Dinsmore, placing his arm about Miss de la St. Claire.

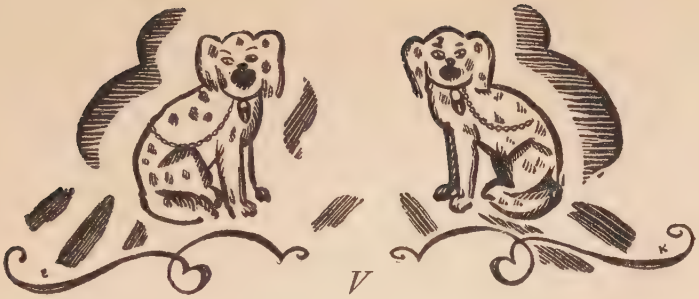
"Please, Papa," said Elsie radiantly, "may I sing another song?"

"No; you may do just what I have given permission for, and nothing else," was the reply.

Mr. Travilla, noticing that Elsie's eyes were filling, said hastily, "Is it not growing late? Should we not depart?"

"Possibly," agreed Mr. Dinsmore. "Yes, let us depart. And as Miss de la St. Claire has no escort, I shall protect her to her door."

"My dear, *thoughtful* Papa!" said Elsie, smiling mistily as they took their leave, Mr. Travilla paying the bill.



V

FAITH

Thy voice is like a fountain,
Leaping up in sunshine bright,
And we never weary counting
Its clear droppings, lone and single,
Or when in one full gush they mingle
Shooting in melodious light.

J. R. Lowell.

AS Elsie's father came into the living-room one afternoon, he found his little daughter half-reclining upon a sofa, pale and languid. Her only greeting was a brave, sweet smile.

"Are you going into a decline, child?" he asked in deep concern. "Is anything seriously amiss? Perhaps the life you have been leading recently is too strenuous for you."

"Oh, no! Papa," said Elsie, in reply to his condolences, attempting to assume her wonted cheerfulness. "I am quite well, thank you, and I do not wish

to give up my education. I was only a little dismal. I almost fear an attack of the vapors."

"You want change, daughter," he said, his brows knitting. "Do you feel equal to a ride to Yonkers?"

Immediately the little girl's eyes spoke volumes, and the rich color began to come and go in her cheek. "Oh! indeed, Papa," she said, more like herself, "I should like it *greatly*."

"If you are too much fatigued," he added, "we might defer it until tomorrow."

"Please, dear Papa," she replied in a more sprightly tone, "I am *quite* well, for I had nine hours of sound, refreshing sleep last night. The cause of my indisposition was truly not my health, but concern over my spiritual welfare. I am afraid that I shall never be holy — I am vile — oh, *so* vile, so sinful! My sins — they are so many — so black!"

"I had not noticed it," said her father indulgently. "However, let us not neglect the temple in which the soul resides. A little wholesome recreation will do you good."

"Do you think so, Papa?" said Elsie eagerly. "Then I *should* like to take a ride."

"Capital," said Mr. Dinsmore heartily. "Make haste, my child."

Being, even as she had admitted, not quite perfect,

the little girl was not above enjoying secular things, and it was with ever brightening countenance that she donned a pretty jacket and hat; and she clasped her father's hand trustingly as they proceeded out of the house.

"But where is the limousine, with Uncle Ajax at the wheel?" she asked in astonishment, as they reached the sidewalk.

"Not wishing you to become ennuied of *simple* pleasures," said Mr. Dinsmore, smiling, "I have decided that we shall ride in the subway."

"Oh! how *pleasant*, Papa!" she exclaimed. "I *enjoy* mingling with the common herd."

The two, father and daughter, made an impressive pair as they walked down the street seeking a West Side subway entrance. They were by no means unobserved, and more than once the remark might have been heard from someone whose eyes were turned in their direction, "What a very fine-looking gentleman!" or, "What a lovely little girl!"

As they passed a newsstand, Mr. Dinsmore stopped and bought a crisp daily newspaper, which he presented to Elsie with a kind smile and a courtly bow.

"Oh! thank you, Papa," she cried, her eyes swimming in glad tears at this token of his affection.

At the underground entrance to the subway station,

Mr. Dinsmore halted again. "Elsie, my child," he said in a low tone, "lift the little metal door in the turnstile, which is the means of access to returned coins. Perhaps you will find something of interest."

"But whatever for, Papa?" she asked, her dark eyes widening. "Why, indeed?"

"Obey me instantly!" he ordered, brooking no hesitation. "As I have told you before, my word is as the law of the Medes and Persians, which altered not."

She did as he had said, trembling in every limb; and what should she find in the coin receptacle but a bright, shining dime, which she drew out with astonishment.

"You see?" said Mr. Dinsmore, not unkindly. "Your father knows."

"Indeed, *yes*," she agreed in contrition. "In the future, I shall try to be a better girl. I should not have questioned, for I am ever learning anew the lesson which I have learned a hundred times before — that you, dear Papa, know best."

"Exactly," he said. "Now if you will give me the ten-cent piece, I shall pay our fare."

With characteristic thoroughness, Elsie proceeded to examine all the other coin receptacles, but she had not quite finished her search when the Broadway ex-

"Such injustice!" muttered Mr. Dinsmore angrily, as he was swept into the train.

press arrived. The doors of the train were skillfully opened by a thoughtful guard, and as a number of people were trying to enter the very door which Elsie and her father had chosen, another guard on the platform began to wreak his hellish rage upon the populace by pushing them rudely into the car, shouting all the while, "Watch your step! Watch your step!"

"Such injustice!" muttered Mr. Dinsmore angrily, as he was swept into the train, where he took his place beside a very beautiful young lady, whom he had never seen before.

Even more incensed than he was Elsie, who, although she could bear her own troubles patiently, always felt her heart bleed for the grief and pain of her fellow creatures.

"How dare you? How *dare* you?" she cried to the rude guard, stamping her foot and drawing a long, sobbing breath. For although she usually possessed the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, she was capable of the highest righteous indignation when aroused. Having winged this shaft, perceiving with amazement that the subway guard did not wince under it, she attempted to reason with him.

"Sir," she said, drawing herself up to her full height and addressing him with the air of a queen, "I

feel certain that you are a lover of sin and the society of the vicious."

"Are you getting into this train or not?" the guard sneered bitterly.

"Sir," continued Elsie, ignoring his irrelevant query, "I feel it my duty to point out to you the error of your ways. Though the *right* way may be at times rough and stony to your feet, the path compassed by foes both wily and strong, yet let me enjoin it upon you to pursue it, and to act in accordance with more *Christian* feelings and emotions."

But so far on the downward path of unrighteousness had the wretched creature travelled, that he refused to give ear to her impassioned plea, and, having closed the doors of the train, he strolled off indifferently.

The train pulled out of the station, bearing Mr. Horace Dinsmore away; and Elsie was left standing alone on the platform. Her first emotion was one of fear at finding herself without protection; but she summoned her fortitude, and when the next Broadway express drew up beside the platform, she entered it, firm in the conviction that she would locate her father at some point along the subway line.

As her train stopped at station after station and she did not find her father waiting on the platform,

the color began to flee from her cheek, and tears began to drop quickly from her eyes.

At 96th Street, a kind and handsome young gentleman helped himself to a seat at her left.

"What is the trouble, little girl?" he asked solicitously. "May I assist you?"

"Thank you," said Elsie, with the courtesy for which she had ever been distinguished, "but as you are a stranger, I cannot accede to your offer of assistance."

"Do not mention it," said the gentleman, glancing away.

"Indeed, sir," said Elsie firmly, "I *must*, for I confide *everything* in my father. I have no concealments from him."

With these words, she opened her newspaper and began to scan the headlines; but as there was little besides traction disputes, law-suits, politics, and homicides, she was afraid to peruse the sheet carefully, lest she read untruths and immoral disclosures.

Then, with her usual interest in all humanity, she noticed that the man on her right was reading her paper over her shoulder.

"Will you accept the newspaper as a gift, sir?" she said politely, handing it to him. "I delight in kind deeds, as you may readily see."

"Think you are being funny?" he growled in reply, glaring balefully and refusing the paper with a curt gesture.

Deeply humiliated by this rebuff from a stranger to whom she had wished to be generous, and at the same time torn by recurrent fears for the safety of her father, whom she still hoped to find, Elsie was sore beset, though she tried valiantly to be plucky.

The rest of the long journey passed as if on leaden feet, and had it not been for the little girl's faith in the ultimate success of all righteous undertakings, she might have given way. Instead, she finally reached the last stop without accident or loss.

"Van Cortlandt Park!" called the subway guard peremptorily.

"Is this Yonkers, sir?" asked Elsie, her heart beating quickly.

"I have just said it was," replied the guard, scowling.

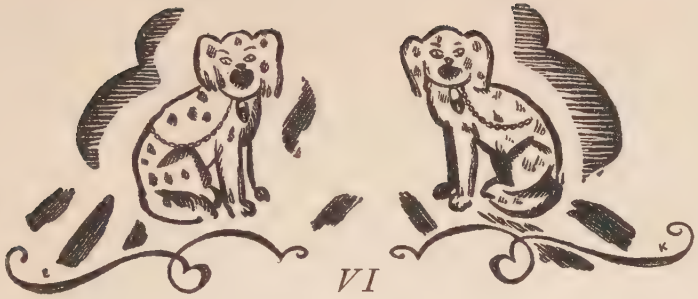
"Thank you, sir," she said, returning good for evil, as she stepped out of the train.

Her heart beat more and more wildly, for she knew, deep in her heart, that somewhere she would find her dear father, waiting for her. Eagerly but anxiously she peered into every face on the station platform. At last she spied him, earnestly engaged in

conversation with the beautiful young lady beside whom he had taken his seat in the subway car.

Elsie ran up to him with a very glad countenance and a soft, happy light in her sweet brown eyes. In her clear, melodious voice, which, though not loud, could be distinctly heard up and down the platform, she cried, "Oh! Papa! I'm *so* happy to have found you again, safe and sound."

"Why!" exclaimed Mr. Horace Dinsmore in some surprise, "were you not hard by, all the while?"



VI

OBEDIENCE

Though at times impetuous with emotion
And anguish long suppressed,
The swelling heart heaves moaning like the ocean,
That cannot be at rest,
We will be patient, and assuage the feeling
We may not wholly stay.

H. LONGFELLOW.

ONE evening as he came home from a visit to his business office, Mr. Dinsmore greeted the little girl even more gaily than usual.

"What do you think Papa has for his little daughter?" he cried, bending to touch his lips to the smooth, white forehead.

"I could not guess, my own dear Papa," she made reply, her eyes glowing with devotion, "for you are always planing pleasant things for me. I hope that it is something which will add to my poise and nobility of character."

"I met this afternoon Mr. Stanley Worthington," he explained, pinching her cheek lightly, "who informed me that we are to receive invitations to a costume ball at their mansion on December 18th. I think it very likely that Edward Travilla will wish to escort you."

"But shall *you* not go, too, dear Papa?" asked the little girl with a tremble in her tones, unable to conceive of enjoying an occasion without her father.

"Of course," he said, laughing over her concern, "but I am to escort Miss Shirley Bixby, whom you do not as yet know. However," he added, seeing her crestfallen countenance, "we shall all go together, in a party."

Elsie brightened perceptibly at his last words, and the roses flowed back into her cheeks. "Oh, Papa, what a start you gave me!" she half laughed. "But *do* tell me more of the costume ball."

"I will, daughter," he said, smiling, as she sank into an easy chair. "The decorations are to be Egyptian, and all the guests are to be costumed appropriately."

"Oh, joy! joy!" cried Elsie, capering about in a transport of gladness. "I am *so* fond of Egyptian history — although, dear Papa, I do not neglect other branches of learning. We shall no doubt see many

costumes of historical interest, from which I can glean much valuable information." The little girl seated herself gracefully on the arm of her father's chair. "What will Miss Bixby wear?"

"That I do not know," answered her father, placing his arm about her. "I spoke with her this afternoon, and commissioned her to secure a costume for you as well."

"Dear Papa," said Elsie, dropping her eyes, "if I were old enough I should like to make a suggestion."

"I will consider you so, my child," he said plesantly. "I can reject or adopt your ideas as I see fit."

"I was just thinking," said Elsie, "that I should like to be costumed as a French lady whose father is a great general in Egypt. I *do* hope that my costume will be French, mon père."

"Let us leave the decision to Miss Bixby, my dear," said her father kindly. "She knows a great deal about these matters, and I am sure that you will be grateful for her assistance."

"Indeed I *shall* be, Papa," said Elsie earnestly. "I am certain that she knows better than I." Then, in tones of eager interest, "What shall *you* wear, dear Papa?"

"I shall be a desert chieftain," he replied with dignity, "a sheik."

"Oh!" exclaimed the child with renewed enthusiasm, "just like the book which you forbade me to read some years ago, dear Papa?"

"The similarity will end with the costume," said Mr. Dinsmore decidedly.

"Aunt Wealthy spoke of the book in glowing terms," remarked Elsie reminiscently. "When she described the hero to me, I thought at the time, 'How masterful! How like my own dear Papa!'"

"That will suffice, Elsie," said her father with some asperity.

Several days elasped after this conversation took place, and the appointed evening found Mr. Horace Dinsmore clad in handsome and colorful flowing robes. Mr. Travilla was resplendent in a uniform of the French army, and Miss Bixby, who was in reality a blonde, looked quite like a beautiful Egyptian, her skin tinted with theatrical paint and a bright piece of cloth wound round her, the whole surmounted by a black wig. The three were in the Dinsmores' living-room, chatting merrily before going to the ball.

"Where *is* Elsie?" asked Mr. Travilla, striding impatiently up and down the long room.

"She does not care greatly for her costume, I fear," said Mr. Dinsmore regretfully.

"What is wrong with it?" said Miss Bixby in surprise. "I thought that little Elsie would make a quaint Cleo, and very amusing."

"Precisely *my* attitude," said Mr. Dinsmore emphatically. "I have not examined the costume carefully, but I fancy that there is nothing wrong with it."

"Hark!" said Mr. Travilla, stopping short as a slight sound caught their ears.

A light, though lingering, step passed down the broad stairway, and crossed the hall, and a slender form appeared in the doorway. It was Elsie, a long cloak wrapped about her. She was already a woman in height; though the innocent, child-like trust in the sweet, fair face and velvety eyes, told another tale.

"Why!" cried her father in annoyance. "You have forgot to don the auburn wig which Miss Bixby provided for you!"

"No, Papa, I did not forget," replied the little girl, with a troubled look. "But I could not wear it. I was afraid that strangers might think that the natural hue of my hair was auburn; and I do *so* wish to be known just as I am, with all my faults."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mr. Dinsmore impatiently, "let me hear no more of such stuff!"

Miss Bixby laughed merrily. "Come, Horace," she suggested, "tell Elsie to wear the red wig, and you and I will hasten from room to room in the Worthington mansion, informing all the guests that her hair is really brown. It will be great fun."

Elsie turned her great eyes upon Miss Bixby. "Oh," she said gratefully, "that would do nicely."

"Oh, come, come," said Mr. Travilla, in his kind way, "*my* opinion is that the auburn wig is not at all necessary. I am sure that Cleopatra would have been even more beautiful if her hair had been the exact shade of little Miss Elsie's. Let her leave off the wig, Dinsmore."

"Yes," agreed Miss Bixby, "we cannot argue all evening."

"A truce to discussion, *if* you please," said Mr. Horace Dinsmore shortly. "As the hour is late, let us be on our way. Elsie, you may go as you are."

"Thank you, Papa," the child faltered gratefully.

As the Dinsmore automobile drew up at the porte-cochère of the justly famed Worthington town-house, many eyes were turned upon its occupants, for an idle crowd had gathered upon the sidewalk outside, to see the merry-makers arrive. Elsie and her father, accustomed as they were to the gaze of passers-by,

hardly noticed the comments and the open-mouthed admiration.

They were assisted to alight from the limousine by a footman in livery, and as they entered the doorway several gentlemen in evening dress approached them. Littl Elsie, caring little whether they were servitors or guests, was about to speak to them cordially, when her father said, in a low tone, "Always await an introduction, daughter."

Elsie then checked her tongue, and followed Miss Bixby into the ladies' cloak room, to which they were ushered by two maid-servants in uniform.

"Have you face powder, Elsie?" asked Miss Bixby solicitously, as she removed her wrap. "You may use mine, for I do not need it, with my grease-paint."

"Oh, *no*, thank you, Miss Bixby," said Elsie gravely. "I never use cosmetics of any sort, for my complexion does not require them, nor do I think them quite honest, giving, as they do, a false aspect."

"Very well, child," said her companion lightly. "Throw off your coat, and let us join the gentlemen."

"No, no," breathed Elsie fearfully. "I cannot appear in public in this garb. I must keep my coat."

Miss Bixby shrugged her shoulders, but said nothing. As they rejoined their escorts, Mr. Dinsmore raised his eyebrows at the sight of Elsie. "Daughter,"

he said, with restraint, "why do you retain your cloak? Remove it at once."

"Oh, Papa," she said, drawing a sobbing breath, "do not ask it of me. I cannot."

"Elsie," he said severely, "simply because you had your way in the matter of the wig, you must not fall into the error of assuming that you can have your way on every occasion."

"Papa," said the child seriously, "I do not want my own way; I know that it would not always be a good way. But my conscience, which is the inner guide of my conduct, informs me that my costume is not sufficiently modest."

"Are you criticizing the taste of Miss Bixby, who is your senior?" inquired her father.

"Now, Horace," protested Miss Bixby, bridling, "I am, after all, not a grandmother in years."

"I do not cast aspersions upon Miss Bixby, Papa," said Elsie, almost weeping, "but I cannot remove the coat."

"Very well," said Mr. Dinsmore in hard tones. "As a punishment for your obdurate and rebellious spirit, you shall wear your coat throughout the evening, ridiculous though you may appear."

The white lids drooped over the soft eyes, and large tears stole from beneath the long, dark lashes,

and rolled silently down the child's cheeks. Her heart was grieved and sore to have displeased her father, while obeying the dictates of her conscience.

As they proceeded toward their host and hostess, who were stationed in the hallway adjoining the ballroom, the little girl said to herself, "What a silly child I am, to be crying. Oh, dear, I have quite disgraced myself before Miss Bixby and *dear* Mr. Travilla, and the servants and the arriving guests, and vexed Papa, too! But I shall bear my punishment without complaint, and show Papa that I am truly sorry to be unable to obey him."

"How do you do, Shirley? Hello, Horace!" greeted Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Worthington, their host and hostess. "And Edward Travilla! And is this little Elsie? Why is the child not in costume?"

Elsie hung her head, as inquiring looks, smiles and friendly greetings were exchanged.

"She *is* in costume," said Mr. Dinsmore gravely, "but for reasons of discipline, I have ordered that she wear her cloak."

As other guests were approaching, our four friends then entered the great ballroom, which was filled with gay, dashing figures, — mimic officers, Cleopatras, Pharaohs, Romans, Bedouins. It was indeed

a festive scene, and there were many hearty shakings and kissings of hands.

But it was not long before a hush fell, for sweet music had begun to play behind the miniature sphinx and pyramids at one end of the hall.

"Let us not dance until we have visited the dining-room," suggested Mr. Dinsmore thoughtfully.

"Well said, Horace," agreed Miss Bixby, snapping her fingers in time with the music.

In the dining-room, they found many jolly people, all in costume, both ladies and gentlemen. Upon the table was an array of bottles of various sizes and shapes, and several large beverage shakers. Half a dozen servants were engaged in mixing and pouring the contents of the bottles into glasses, which they passed to the guests.

Mr. Eugene Thigpen, a burly, ruddy-faced gentleman, clad as Mark Antony, clapped Mr. Dinsmore on the back. "Hello!" he said jovially. The proper introductions were made, and Mr. Thigpen turned to Elsie. "Are you thirsty?" he asked, smiling.

"Oh, thank you, sir," said Elsie gratefully, "I *am* a little thirsty, for I had only one glass of water at dinner."

"Here you are," said Mr. Thigpen, beckoning to one of the servants. "Have some punch."

All received glasses of punch, and Elsie drank hers with relish. "What a delicious beverage!" she said, the natural color mounting in her cheeks. "Mr. Travilla, do you not find the room overheated?"

"Fairly warm," he agreed, considering the situation.

"Perhaps another glass of cool punch will relieve me," she suggested. No sooner were the words spoken, than she was presented with another glassful, which she drank eagerly, though in a lady-like way.

"A second glass has made little difference," she remarked, when she had finished the drink. "I still find it sultry."

"Ah," said Mr. Travilla in a gentle tone, full of sympathy and kindness, "it is, of course, because you are still wearing your coat. I am not at all surprised that you are becoming feverish. Dinsmore, can not little Elsie remove the coat?"

"No," came the firm reply. "She must suffer the heat in consequence of her childish attitude about her costume."

"Dear Papa," said Elsie, in a touchingly humble way, "I am beginning to feel that my costume is not so immodest as it first appeared to me, and I should like to doff my cloak."

"No," said her father unswervingly. "You have received my ultimatum."

Elsie, by this time, was almost fainting, and her cheeks burned. Mr. Travilla, perturbed by these signals of distress, turned and confronted the child's father. "Dinsmore," he cried heatedly, "you are a brute! Have you forgot the near-tragedy when you ordered her to sit on the piano stool until she would consent to sing on Sunday?"

"I shall rear my child in my own way, which seems to me the best way," said Mr. Dinsmore coldly, and he led Miss Bixby out of the room.

"Dear Papa is wiser than *we* are, Mr. Travilla," said Elsie gently, fighting back the tears.

In his kindly way, Mr. Travilla procured two large glasses of punch, giving one to Elsie, who dropped a tear or two. At this moment, a gentleman dressed as a ragged and ferocious pirate joined them, casting admiring glances at Elsie.

"How do you do, Dilliton?" said Mr. Travilla coolly. "Elsie, may I present Mr. Dilliton? This is Dinsmore's daughter, Dilliton."

"I am *extremely* delighted to have made your acquaintance, Miss Dinsmore," said Mr. Dilliton, bowing low.

"You do not know me yet, sir," replied Elsie

modestly, drying her tears. "Though so tall, I am only a little girl, and do not know enough to make an interesting companion for a gentleman."

"I thought I remarked a glass in your hand," said the gentleman, twinkling through his theatrical make-up. "Why do you not remove your coat? Is your costume such that you were insufficiently protected from the night air without a wrap?"

"Oh, Mr. Dilliton," said the child, blushing, "that is not my *main* reason for retaining my wrap."

"What is the reason, pray?" he asked, interestedly.

"*That* I had rather not disclose," she answered, dropping her eyes.

"Shall we stroll into the conservatory for a chat?" suggested her new friend, ignoring Mr. Travilla, who frowned, and, bowing, turned aside.

Elsie took the pirate's arm, and they made their way into the conservatory. As they entered the dimly lighted room, they heard a slight shriek.

"Help!" came in Miss Bixby's merry tones. "My wig has become entangled in Horace's head-dress! Horace, why *did* you use safety pins?"

Elsie sprang forward. "Oh, *do* let *me* help," she cried in sympathizing tones. "How did it *ever*

happen? " Her agile fingers had soon extricated the wig, and her eyes sought her father's flushed countenance.

" Daughter," said Mr. Dinsmore with dignity, avoiding her direct gaze, " I think you have worn your coat long enough to have impressed upon your mind the importance of obedience. You may remove it now."

" Oh, thank you, dear Papa," she said gratefully, happy to bask once more in his approval. With Mr. Dilliton's assistance, she took off the wrap, and stood radiant in her Cleopatra costume.

" *Ah!* " said Mr. Dilliton, his eyes glistening as he surveyed her from head to foot. " To think what we have been missing! "

Mr. Dinsmore glanced from Elsie to Miss Bixby. " It *is* a bit daring for the child," he said uneasily, in a half-tone.

" Horace, you are absurd," was Miss Bixby's amused answer. " You speak like Elsie herself."

" Not at all," he said stiffly. Then turning to the little girl, he said, in a more distinct voice, " You see, Elsie? Your costume is all right."

" Yes, Papa," she replied, with a smile of satisfaction. " You always know best."

" Let us return to the dining-room," suggested

"Ah!" said Mr. Dilliton, his eyes glistening as he surveyed her from head to foot. "To think what we have been missing!"

Mr. Dilliton. "The light is poor here in the conservatory."

"Splendid!" they all agreed, suiting the action to the word.

Round after round of merry toasts followed, and Elsie's delight in her father's good will knew no bounds. After a time, they were again joined by Mr. Travilla, whose face lighted up at the sight of his friends. His astonishment at seeing Elsie without her cloak was very marked, but it was mingled with admiration.

"May I have the pleasure of dancing with you, Miss Elsie?" he inquired deferentially.

"Certainly, Mr. Travilla," the little girl replied cordially, taking his arm, and courtesying to Mr. Dilliton as they departed.

"Come, let us dance, too, Shirley," said Mr. Dinsmore.

Our four friends entered the ballroom, where the dazzling sight of lights and the many-colored costumes made Elsie so dizzy that she was forced to hold Mr. Travilla's arm in order to steady herself.

They joined the whirl of dancers, and she was quite bewildered by the vast sea of faces. "But," she cried, pirouetting gaily in her partner's arms, "I feel very *happy!*"

"Good music, and an excellent floor," remarked Mr. Travilla genially, tightening his arm about her as he swung her into an intricate turn.

At the conclusion of the dance, the little girl skipped lightly about the ballroom, followed by her faithful friend, in and out among the throng, until she found her father.

"Oh, Papa," she carolled, her eyes sparkling with joy, "*dearest* Papa, a more delightful occasion could hardly have been devised, and I am fast learning to be at ease in society. And now may I add to the pleasure of the guests by performing a solo dance in Egyptian style when the music commences again?"

"In *that* costume?" her father exclaimed, in a horrified voice. "Travilla, do you not think it is time we were leaving?"

VII

FORTITUDE

Heaven oft in mercy smites, e'en when the blow
Severest is.

JOANNA BAILLIE.

In this wild world the fondest and the best
Are the most tried, most troubled and distressed.

CRABBE.

"WHERE is Papa? " It was Elsie's sweet voice that asked the question, in a tone of alarm. She had just finished practicing her music and attending morning lessons with Miss Bliss, and, still as bright as the day in spite of the grilling toil, had searched in vain for her father's noble form.

" Massa say he don' feel berry well," was the reply in the soft speech of Uncle Pompey, the aged servitor, to whom she had put the question.

At his words, Elsie's heart was filled with sad forebodings. Often her father slept late in the morning,

so that she had no opportunity to wish him good morning over the breakfast table. But rarely did he fail to appear by the time the child's lessons were over. Hence her anxious query and her premonition of disaster.

"I shall go to his bedside at once," said Elsie, bravely bearing up under her distress.

"Massa kinda cross dis mawnin'," added Uncle Pompey, shaking his old gray head. "I'd leabe him alone, li'l missy."

"Oh," cried the little girl in heartfelt anguish. "Leave my own poor dear Papa *alone*, when he is on a couch of suffering? Indeed, *no*, Uncle Pompey. Not so long as I may be able to attend him. I knew last evening when he forbade me to sit up until he returned from his director's meeting, that he would be late. I knew even then that he would injure his health. Oh, why, *why* will he so overwork?"

The great loving heart was sad and sore, and the voice shook with emotion. As on wings she flew out of the room and up the stairs, and knocked timidly upon her father's door, trembling, hoping yet fearing, and pouring out agonizing supplications that her dear, *dear* Papa might be spared, at least until he was prepared to go to heaven.

Hearing his voice within, she breathed a sigh of relief, and entered.

"Yes, pet, I reached home safely," Mr. Dinsmore was saying into the telephone transmitter, as he sat up in his sumptuous bed, with a wet towel wrapped about his weary, aching head. Noticing Elsie's entrance, he finished hastily, "I'll call again later," and hung up the receiver.

"What do you mean by intruding in this fashion?" he asked of her in some irritation. "Can you not see that I am *ill?*"

The child was stung to the quick by this reception, yet she laid aside her own selfish feelings in her anxiety for her father's condition. "Dear Papa, are you *very* ill?" she asked in moved tones.

"Yes, daughter," he said sadly. "I have a severe headache, and some fever, perhaps. But do not be alarmed, my pet," he added, as her eyes filled with tears, "it is nothing at all serious."

"You will let me be your little nurse, my own dear Papa, will you not?" she asked coaxingly.

"I do not require a nurse," he said shortly. "All I need is freedom from the claims of society for a time."

"Then perhaps you will allow me to make your telephone calls for you, dear Papa," offered the child generously.

"What nonsense!" he exclaimed testily. "Do not interfere in my affairs."

"Oh, Papa," she cried, in a touchingly humble way, "I did not mean to interfere. I only wanted to save you from any expenditure of valuable energy. If I have offended you, I beg a thousand pardons."

"Daughter," said her father sternly, "do not allow yourself to speak so extravagantly. One is enough."

"Then," said Elsie, a tear trembling in her eye, but an almost playful tone creeping into her voice, "I beg *one* pardon."

"That," he replied more leniently, pleased with her wit, "I am willing to grant."

"Oh! thank you, Papa," said she, with ready gratitude. "You are so generous in forgiving me, your naughty little girl."

"A slight matter, after all, my child," he said, shifting the bandage on his well-shaped head. "I see plainly that you intended no offense. And in passing, Elsie, I might say that the telephone call which you overheard was a business matter. I was speaking with my head clerk, Mr. Pettiform, whom I in fun call Pet."

"Oh! Papa," exclaimed Elsie, clapping her hands with momentary gaiety, "how Mr. Pettiform must appreciate your spirit of humor!"

"And now," said her father, not unkindly, "have

you finished your lessons? Have you practiced your music? "

"Oh, yes, Papa, *long* since," she replied in simple truthfulness.

"Have you no duties to perform?" he pursued relentlessly.

"Oh, Papa," she confessed contritely, "I have not yet done my daily tasks, for I was too distracted by learning of your illness to tarry a *second*."

"Make no excuses, Elsie," said Mr. Dinsmore gravely. "I do not like to think that you take advantage of my indisposition to neglect your duties."

"I shall attend to them at once, Papa," she said, appreciating to the fullest her father's unselfish desire that even his illness should not interfere with the building of her character.

She bade him good-bye for the nonce, and skipped downstairs in her zeal to have the tasks over. While she was completing her last chore, which was watering the rubber plants, her quick mind seized upon a way to please her father and to lighten the weary hours of suffering. As soon as her conscience was satisfied that she had poured enough moisture about the roots of the plants, she ran quickly into the kitchen, which was presided over by black Aunt Phillis.

"Aunt Phillis," said Elsie, who treated servants

and crowned heads alike with thoughtful courtesy, "dear Papa is sick, and I have a mind to prepare some little dainties for him."

"Lawd, Miss Elsie," said the old darkey, who intended no profanity by the expletive, "he don' nebber want vittles when he feel dis way."

"I shall try to tempt him, at any rate," cried the child, almost merry in the thought that she was doing something for her father. "Surely he will wish to consume what *I* have cooked."

So saying, she set about concocting fruit tarts, chocolate blanc-mange, cocoanut fondant, and tapioca pudding for the beloved invalid, her sweet voice carolling all the while like some wild bird of the wood.

"Miss Elsie, you sho' is smart," said Aunt Phillis admiringly, as she stood with her hands on her hips, watching the little girl.

"Oh, no, Aunt Phillis," replied Elsie modestly. "That I am able to do *so many* things well is due to the careful training I have had, and to no virtue of my own; for I am *far* from perfect."

"Naw suh, Miss Elsie, I says to Pomp dis mawnin', I says, 'Pomp, dat chile sho' is smart.' Dat's true, Miss Elsie. You kin ax dat no-count Pomp if it ain' so."

Elsie patted the sable cheek affectionately. "I fear

that you are but flattering me, Aunt Phillis," was her smiling rejoinder.

When she had at last finished the toothsome dishes, the little girl carried upstairs the fruits of her labors, upon a handsome silver tray, tastefully garnished with a fragrant nosegay from the begonia plants in the conservatory. The devoted Pompey followed at her heels, his dusky face furrowed with concern over the weight of the burden she carried.

"Don' you want no help, missy?" he asked anxiously.

"No, thank you, Pompey," she answered smilingly. "I shall bear the tray with my own hands, for I know that it will be the more acceptable to dear Papa."

Entering her father's room alone, she found him asleep, breathing heavily but regularly, although he was still flushed and feverish. Thankful that the Lord had spared him to her, the child stationed herself beside his bed to await his awakening, the heavy tray upon her frail lap.

Her loving gaze resting upon his face, distinguished even in sleep, she waited thus patiently for some time. She did not regret the passing hours, for was she not glad to be able to watch over him while he was in danger?

"Don' you want no help Missy?" he asked anxiously.
"No, thank you, Pompey," she answered smilingly.
"I shall bear the tray with my own hands, for I know that it will be the more acceptable to dear Papa."

At luncheon time, the faithful Pompey entered on tiptoe, whispering to her, "Missy, you ain' gwine miss yo' lunch, is you?"

"My duty is *here*," she replied with peaceful resignation. "I could not swallow a mouthful of food while I thought that my Papa needed me. I shall remain by his bedside, though I wait until sundown."

Nothing that Uncle Pompey could say turned her from her purpose, and the old darkey went away, shaking his head in despair. But, indeed, it was not long afterward that Mr. Horace Dinsmore turned over, yawned, grimaced, and then opened his handsome but tired eyes. Flushing and paling by turns, her eyes riveted upon his face, Elsie mutely held out her offering of rich sweets and dainties. He looked at the tray with little relish.

"Am I expected to *eat* those viands?" he asked distastefully.

"I made them for you, dear Papa," said the little girl in faltering accents, bursting into hot, scalding tears. "But if you do not care for them, I will take them away."

"That will do nicely," he answered, turning over again and closing his eyes.

Poor little Elsie! She hastened to her own room, where she deposited the rejected tray on the floor.

Flinging herself upon a couch, she wept long and bitterly, feeling like a homeless, friendless outcast from society. Her grief was deep and despairing, but there was no anger in it because of her father's indifference; on the contrary, her heart was filled with intense love for him, mingled with alarm over his refusal to keep up his strength by partaking of food.

"O Papa, my own dear, *dear* Papa," mourned the sad little heart, although he was not there to hear, "you do not love me, or you would eat for my sake. Oh! my heart will break!"

Gradually her sobs ceased, and she grew calmer. "Oh!" she said to herself in shame, "this is not *honoring* Papa. I am thinking too much of my own state of feeling, when I should be devoting myself to him, on his bed of pain. The many servants are always within beck and call, but a menial can ill supply a daughter's place. My heart aches to think how he must miss my sympathy and love, while I am so thoughtlessly giving way to emotion."

Drying her tears carefully, and assuming a cheerful countenance for his sake, she returned to her father's room. As she entered, he was reaching for the telephone.

"Are you better now, Papa?" she asked in a tone of deep compassion. But ere she had finished her sen-

tence, she was trembling violently at the dark frown she saw gathering on his brow.

"No!" he replied in a bellicose voice.

"Oh, Papa," she said, almost beside herself, "then shall I darken the room a little and apply restoratives, or shall I send for the doctor?"

"No," he said, in the cold, severe tone she so much dreaded. "I need nothing but solitude."

"But may I not bring some cool water and bathe your head, Papa?" she asked, shaking with fear, as she touched his hand gently.

"That is hardly necessary," he said, sternly putting her from him. "Please leave my presence."

"Oh, Papa!" the cry of anguish broke from her lips, as she stood irresolute. Her heart beat fast, her color came and went by turns, and her eyes filled with tears. His words were like daggers to the affectionate, sensitive child. Had he stabbed her to the heart, he could not have hurt her more than to refuse all offers of ministration.

"Elsie!" exclaimed her father, in a tone of mingled reproof and surprise, "did you hear me?"

"Yes, Papa," she murmured in a low tone.

"Then go," he said frigidly. "I intend to be obeyed."

She turned and fled to her room once more, weep-

ing and sobbing, for she realized that she had been very naughty in not departing on the instant that her father spoke.

"Oh, why am I so sinful?" she moaned. "Now I am convinced that Papa will never, never love me again. I cannot, cannot bear it. Perhaps he will *die* without forgiving me, and I shall go to my grave a heart-broken woman." At the very thought, the little girl was seized with such a paroxysm of grief that great bursting sobs shook her whole frame. She sank on her knees, and covered her face with her hands, while the tears trickled fast between the slender fingers. She longed, with an unutterable longing, for one fond caress, and an assurance of his forgiveness.

Summoning her courage, she rose and stole out of her room once more, hesitated at her father's door, and finally, trembling between hope and fear, entered the room. Mr. Dinsmore was again reaching out for the telephone, and at sight of Elsie his face darkened, the frown and stern expression reminding the child of earlier experiences.

Hardly waiting for him to speak, Elsie said in pleading tones, "Excuse me, dear Papa, but I am afraid that I shall die if I do not learn whether your bed of pain is eased, and whether you are still angry with me."

Her father's stern expression relaxed slightly, and he patted her little hand. "I am not angry with you, daughter," he replied, "and I shall soon be quite restored to health. Now run along."

"Oh, Papa, you *are* angry with me, else you would not wish to send me away from you," she said brokenly.

"Daughter!" he rebuked her. "Do not attempt to judge your elders. My sole reason for ordering you out of the room was a consideration for your health. It is not healthful for a child of your age to assume the responsibility of caring for the indisposed. Should you not be resting, or taking exercise, at this hour? Does not my little girl wish some play this afternoon?"

"I could not play light-heartedly, while you are suffering, Papa," said Elsie, in a low tone. "*May* I not stay and nurse you instead?"

"Elsie, I have given you my command, and the reasons for it," said Mr. Dinsmore, with restraint. "How many times must I tell you that you are not to seek to move me from my purposes? I wish you to rest or to exercise."

"Oh, Papa," she said emotionally, "if it were *only* possible for me to obey you and at the same time do something for *you*, in your illness. For you have

not eaten, Papa. If the delicacies which I prepared did not please you, perhaps there is something else which *would*. A shirred egg, perchance, Papa? "

"Oh, by all means," he replied in some irritation, "if that will satisfy you."

"Then I may indeed cook an egg for you, dear Papa? " she said, brightening.

"Yes, yes, yes," said Mr. Dinsmore with a weary sigh, reaching for the telephone as she departed on her errand.

It was no more than forty minutes later when she returned, with the dainty egg on a perfect slice of buttered toast, the whole on a handsome plate of European ware. As she entered the room, she saw that her father was up, and dressed faultlessly for the afternoon. He looked very gay and handsome, and was whistling a merry tune.

"Well, Elsie, my child, what is this you have? " he asked, in jovial mood, giving her a kiss upon her fresh young cheek.

"Your egg, dear, darling Papa," said Elsie, overjoyed at his miraculous recovery.

"*My* egg? Why, what on earth can I do with *that?* " he asked in astonishment. "I'm going out, on business! "

VIII

DILIGENCE

Rise, my soul, and stretch thy wings,
Thy better portion trace;
Rise from transitory things,
Toward heaven, thy native place.

ANON.

ONE evening, Elsie's father came in with a very downcast countenance, receiving the proffered kiss of his daughter with little of his accustomed good spirits.

"Oh, Papa," cried Elsie, her voice trembling almost too much for utterance, as she noted that something was amiss, "are you ill again?"

"Yes, my child," he replied, passing a weary hand over his brow.

This news quite saddened Elsie's sensitive spirit, and she gave way to broken exclamations of grief and anguish. "Oh! my own dear Papa," she wailed in hushed tones, "we are not going to lose you — ?"

He folded the frail figure to him, answering, "No, daughter. I am out of health, but not incurable."

"Then," said the child, brightening through her tears, "by God's blessing upon skillful medical advice and attention, and the best of nursing by my own hand, you shall be brought through the trying ordeal."

"That is hardly necessary," answered Mr. Dinsmore quickly. "I have already consulted a competent physician, who states that a trip to Florida will do me good, and probably restore me entirely."

"Oh, Papa!" exclaimed the little girl, clapping her hands, "how splendid! I shall commence my packing at once."

"No, Elsie," said her father, shaking his head, "my physician orders quiet and peace, and advises me to leave you in the devoted hands of Mammy Chloe."

"Dear Papa," mourned the almost despairing little heart, while the eager, joyous expression faded away from her face, "I should *die* without you here, knowing that you are in failing health."

"Daughter," said Mr. Dinsmore gravely, "never forget that we are but strangers and pilgrims upon this earth, only passing through it on the way to an eternal home of either everlasting blessedness or

never-ending woe. And while it is pleasant to walk together, yet when it becomes necessary to part, we must exercise forbearance and not give way to grief."

"Oh, Papa," cried Elsie resolutely, though the tears flowed fast, "you have trained me aright, and I shall master my emotions."

"*That* sounds more like my own brave little daughter," said her father fondly. "See! I have already purchased my railway ticket." At these words, he flourished a folded slip before her.

"Oh, Papa," said Elsie, a great light dawning in her eyes, which, though suffused with tears but a moment before, were keen and bright. "What a wag you are! You can not tease me further, for I see that there are *two* tickets! "

"*What?* My child, you must be mistaken," said Mr. Dinsmore in some confusion, replacing the paper in his pocket.

"No, no, Papa," carolled Elsie, dancing about him, "there *are* two tickets. I see through your pleasant joke now! I shall after all be able to nurse you back to health."

"Can I never surprise you completely? " queried her father, in slight irritation.

"I shall immediately pack a medicine kit," said Elsie happily, absorbed in her plans, "for I am a

careful little body. I shall take with us lozenges, unguents, remedies for train-sickness, and bandages of all types, so that I may give you the proper care, my own dear Papa."

"Daughter," commanded her father severely, "I forbid you to burden yourself with worry over me. Leave the physic behind, for I shall be hale and hearty with a little rest and change of climate."

"Very well, Papa," replied Elsie meekly. "I wanted to make every possible sacrifice for your comfort. I thought —"

"You should not overtax your mind with thinking, my child," he interrupted kindly.

It was several evenings later that father and daughter took their departure upon the well-appointed railway train bound for Florida, on which each of the two occupied a stateroom.

"I should like very much indeed to wait up in the observation car until we have reached Washington," said Elsie thoughtfully, as she took her seat in her own compartment; "for I should be uplifted to look upon the scenes where the great laws of our land have been enacted. Then, too, the Father of Our Country, for whom the city was named, seems to me to have been as nearly perfect as one of the sinful race of man could be."

"I consider such a course unwise," replied her father, with a slight frown, "for late hours endanger the health. I shall now leave you, and trust that you will retire at the earliest possible moment."

"Oh, indeed I shall, dear Papa," said the child, lifting her sweet face for the good night kiss. "But do not hesitate to call me in the night if you are harassed by any pains."

"Good night, my child," he said gently. "I am sure that I shall not suffer. Do not lie awake with anxiety."

After her father had left her, the little girl first imparted a cosy, home-like appearance to her state-room by setting out a few photographs of her father and others dear to her. Then she made ready for slumber; and her last thought as she dropped off into a sound sleep was an earnest petition for her father's speedy recovery, which we may be sure a just Deity heeded.

Wakening in the morning as fresh as the day, little Elsie, in her concern for her father's condition, hastened to clothe herself, and made her way into the observation car. There she found her dear Papa, in excellent spirits, gaily chatting with Miss Shirley Bixby.

"Papa! Papa! good morning, dear Papa!" Elsie cried, running gracefully to his side.

"Well! well!" said he, his face suddenly reddening with good humor. "I hardly expected to see you up so soon, my dear. Is it not a surprise to find that our friend Miss Bixby has a stateroom in the next car, Elsie? Miss Bixby, you remember my charming little daughter, do you not?"

"Of course I remember Elsie," answered the young lady cordially.

"Papa turned flatterer!" said Elsie, hiding her smiling, blushing, sparkling face against his stalwart shoulder. Then, remembering her manners, which were irreproachable, she inquired after Miss Bixby's health, receiving a favorable reply.

"And *you*, Papa?" she continued anxiously. "Is your condition improved?"

"What!" exclaimed Miss Bixby in astonishment. "Have you been ill, Horace?"

"No — that is," explained Mr. Dinsmore, again flushing slightly, "do you not remember that I was just telling you that my physician had advised this trip to Florida?"

"Oh, yes!" she agreed, laughing merrily. "I had forgot. Elsie, do you not think that your father looks improved already?"

"*Yes*, Miss Bixby," the little girl answered earnestly, "he seems to have taken such a turn for the better, that only those who love him dearly could guess his true state."

"Elsie," said her father, with lowered brows, "I think we need say no more about my health, for I have no wish to be regarded by our fellow-passengers as an invalid. I am confident that I shall recover rapidly."

The child drew a long breath, while her eyes glowed with renewed hope. "I understand, dear Papa," she said, in low tones. "And I shall not speak of it again, but give thanks in secret."

"Now shall I conduct you ladies to the dining car?" was his cheery proposal, to which the two acceded readily enough.

After breakfast, Mr. Dinsmore glanced over the current literature provided by the railway company, and with great care chose a volume which could not upset Elsie's childish faith and innocence, and would at the same time afford her an opportunity for self-improvement. It was a prettily bound book, one of Abbot's works. Elsie had read several of his historical tales, and liked them very much, and her father could hardly have selected a more acceptable piece of writing.

"Here, daughter," he said, placing the tome in her hands, "pass your day in the enjoyment of literary pursuits. I do not wish you to waste your time in idleness. And in order to receive full benefits from your reading, you had best retire to your stateroom, I think."

"*Thank* you, *dear* Papa; you are *so* kind and good to me," she said gratefully, laying the book down to put her arms around his neck and kiss him. "I do *so* enjoy a nice book, especially when read with you."

"I shall read with you *another* time," said her father hastily. "For the present let us see how clearly you can grasp the substance of this book without my direction."

"I shall *try* not to disgrace your tutelage, Papa," replied the child, turning over the leaves with eager delight, as she courtesied sedately, and retired to her compartment.

So engrossed did she become in the perusal of her book, that she did not heed the passing hours; and great was her surprise when her father roused her with the announcement that it was time for luncheon. After cleansing her hands and face, and smoothing her pongee frock, the little girl joined Miss Bixby and her father, and the trio proceeded to the dining car.

Luncheon was a merry meal, for the two older members of the party were in jolly mood, and Elsie was imbued with enthusiasm for her reading. Following the repast, Elsie begged to be excused, so that she might finish her book before the end of the journey.

"I can see that you have trained little Elsie properly, Horace," smiled Miss Bixby approvingly.

"Papa is always careful of my upbringing, Miss Bixby," said Elsie with sincerity. "Without him, I should have been no better than most of the young people I see about me, — although," she finished with a modest smile, "I am far from perfect yet."

"Elsie," warned her father, "time is fleeting, and I am sure that you have much to read before the day is done."

The child then hurried back to her beloved volume, and again lost herself in its pages. Once more the hours rolled past unheeded, as the cars sped on and on to the Southland.

Although in reality it was some time later, it seemed to Elsie only a few minutes, when her father again knocked at her stateroom door, advising her to make ready to leave the train. She laid the book down reluctantly, for she had yet a few pages to read, and with skillful hands she repacked her portmanteau. In

scarcely more than the twinkling of an eye, she was ready, portmanteau and all.

"Papa! Papa!" she cried, in her excitement, "are we *truly* entering the city of Palm Beach?"

"We are pulling into West Palm Beach," he explained, smiling at the childish jubilation, "and there remains to us only the trip across Lake Worth to Palm Beach itself."

At this moment, Miss Bixby hurried to join them. "Oh, Horace," she cried in perturbation, "the half-empty bottle which we left on the back platform of the observation car has disappeared!"

"Oh! Papa," broke in Elsie, grasping the significance of Miss Bixby's announcement, "does this mean that you have been taking medicine, without mentioning it to me?"

"Certainly," replied her father stiffly. "Have you forgot that I am making this trip for my health? I only wished to spare you the anxiety."

IX

GENTILITY

Let our thoughts be ever
Pure as yonder sun;
Gentle as the breezes,
When the night comes on.

ANON.

"TO think that we are now in Florida!" exclaimed Elsie, the following morning, as she and her noble-looking father sat down to a sumptuous breakfast at their hotel, as befitted their station in life. "And what shall we do today?"

"As the sun is not yet four hours high," replied her father in pleasant tones, "I think we may have sufficient time to purchase swimming suits, and join our friends Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Worthington at the Bath and Tennis Club."

"Oh! that will indeed be delightful," said the little girl, in whose heart reigned such excitement

that she could only partake of the morning meal with even more daintiness than was her wont.

A busy hour or so rolled past, and the Dinsmores found themselves at the exclusive Club, engaged in the exchange of salutations with their friends, the Worthingtons. Mr. Dinsmore had a kindly, hearty handshake for all, and Elsie a charming courtesy.

"Should you like to go into the water at once?" asked Mrs. Worthington graciously, as she led the way to the gay little capannas, which served as bath houses.

"Not until I have donned my new swimming suit," said Elsie, with a roguish twinkle. When this sally passed unobserved, a slight shadow stole over her bright face for the moment; but sunshine soon broke through the clouds at the prospect of an invigorating dip.

Remarking that she found the water too cool for swimming in the morning, Mrs. Worthington decided to do a turn on the beach while little Elsie made ready in the capanna. With eager hands the child made her preparations, but upon unwrapping her new suit, she found that by some mischance the knee-length outer skirt of the bathing suit had been omitted. Her heart was sore with grief, and, try as

she might, she could not withhold the hot tears; her little frame shook with racking sobs.

Finally, she gained control, resolving not to spoil the pleasure of her companions, and she resumed her street dress of white linen, just as Mrs. Worthington's sweet voice came to her from without the cabanna: "Are you ready, Elsie, dear?"

"Oh, Mrs. *Worthington*," cried Elsie, weeping afresh, as she joined her kind hostess, "my bathing suit is incomplete, and I cannot appear in it."

"What a pity! Perhaps you can wear mine. Let me get it for you," said Mrs. Worthington sympathetically.

"Oh, no, *indeed*," protested Elsie, drying her eyes. "I could not think of using yours, lest I injure it in some way, though not intentionally, of course. I am very foolish to carry on in such a fashion. Perhaps — who knows, Mrs. Worthington? — perhaps it is for the best that I should not go swimming. Perhaps it is a punishment for my sins; which are many and black."

Mrs. Worthington smiled as she made reply, "I think that hardly likely, my dear. But suppose we sun ourselves on the beach, and forget our troubles."

"I do not wish to forget *my* troubles, Mrs. Worthington," said Elsie, smiling bravely, "for they must

have been sent to me for a purpose, which I am not wise enough to discern. But I think that it will do nicely to sit upon the beach." Her heart smote her that she had been thinking so much of herself, and devoting so little attention to others. Half-reclining upon the sand in the sunlight, she searched the shore and the breakers for her father's form. Unable to locate him with her eyes, she queried anxiously, "Is Papa safe, Mrs. Worthington?"

"Quite safe," answered the older woman reassuringly. "Both gentlemen started off for a swim some time ago, and I have not seen them since; but I am convinced that nothing untoward has happened."

As time passed, and the two did not reappear, little Elsie's heart became heavier and heavier, until it was like lead in her bosom. At length, she saw Mr. Worthington, a fine-looking man, strolling toward them, alone. At the sight, her breast was nigh to bursting.

"Oh, Mr. Worthington," she cried breathlessly, running toward him, "tell me the worst; is my own dear Papa *drowned?*"

"Far from it, my dear," he replied, patting her shoulder benevolently, as Mrs. Worthington joined them. "Did you not see him as he came back to dress? He asked me to present his compliments to you ladies,

and request you to excuse him from luncheon. He has met a friend who has some important matters to discuss."

"The same old Horace!" laughed Mrs. Worthington.

"*Dear* Papa!" said Elsie, her eyes misting with daughterly affection. "*Always* business. At home he often attends to large transactions in the evening hours, as well as at all times of the day. I fancy that that is why he was ordered here for his health."

"Horace can find business anywhere," remarked Mr. Worthington, glancing at his wife in amusement.

"I suggest that you fetch us a lunch from the cafeteria, Stanley, since Horace will not be with us," said Mrs. Worthington, changing the subject. "Elsie will enjoy lunching in our capanna, I am sure."

"*Yes*, dear Mrs. Worthington," Elsie agreed with beautiful courtesy. "I think that we shall all enjoy it greatly, knowing that Papa is improving in health, and is not now in danger."

Mr. Worthington soon returned from the cafeteria, and a delightful collation was spread before them. In the meantime, Mrs. Worthington had prepared a beverage to slake their thirst before eating.

"What a delicious drink!" exclaimed Elsie, sipping her glassful. "It is just to my taste."

"It seems to consist largely of ginger ale," remarked Mr. Worthington, in a slightly complaining tone.

"Good heavens!" cried his wife hastily. "I must have confused the glasses!"

"*Just* to my taste," repeated Elsie, draining her glass, and setting it down with a rather uncertain movement. "It is similar to the punches which you served to the guests during the Egyptian ball, but much nicer, if I may say so. Oh, what a delightful time I am having in Palm Beach! If only dear Papa were here!"

"Do have another sandwich, Elsie, dear," urged Mrs. Worthington. "Stanley, why not mix another drink for yourself?"

"I am not especially hungry, thank you, Mrs. Worthington," said Elsie, whose pretty ways were very winning, "but I *do* feel still a little thirsty. Might I have another drink?"

"Bravo!" cried her host, refilling both her glass and his own.

"Stanley!" said his wife, in alarm. "Do you deem it wise for the child?"

"My dear," he chided playfully, "you wrong my cellar. *This* could not harm anyone. Allow her to imbibe all she wishes."

"As you say, Stanley," said Mrs. Worthington resignedly, "but the responsibility shall be yours."

"Dear Papa," mused Elsie aloud, as she sipped her second glassful. "Do you suppose he is recovering from his illness? He has seemed much better since we arrived, but I have been *so* worried about him."

Mr. Worthington at this point emitted a strange sound.

"Stanley!" said his wife quietly.

"Merely a cough, my dear," he explained, "a slight strangulation. Elsie, may I pour a little more for you?"

"Oh, thank you, sir," said the little girl, gracefully accepting his offer. "You are very kind to me, *almost* as kind as my own dear Papa."

As Elsie uttered the words, her host was again seized with a coughing spell, this time more severe, by far. The child's solicitude was aroused, but her offers of assistance were refused. Fortunately, Mr. Worthington soon recovered, and the pleasant luncheon was ended without further mishap.

"I have greatly enjoyed these viands," said Elsie politely, rising to her feet, "but —" at this point she faltered, raising her hand to her brow — "I feel slightly dizzy. I have had such spells once or twice

in the past, and I have always found that a nap is a great cure. May I take one now? "

The child truly was so vertiginous that she could not think or reason; she could only press her hands to her temples, in the vain endeavor to still their wild throbbing. The Worthingtons hastened to make her comfortable, and, to their relief, in a few moments she was sleeping sweetly, feeling no pain.

For hours she lay almost motionless, her lovely, refined countenance flushed with slumber, dreaming happily of her father's love and tenderness. When at length the long rays of the setting sun were tinging the waters with rosy hues, and the balmy air of day was gradually changing into the dewy cool of twilight, her dark eyes flew open, to light upon her father bending over her, and Mr. and Mrs. Worthington standing modestly by.

"Oh, dear, *darling* Papa! " she cried in moved tones, throwing her arms about his neck.

"My child! " he exclaimed with feeling. "Do you feel equal to arising and dressing for dinner? "

"I am a trifle weak, but otherwise in good health," replied the little girl, in an effort after cheerfulness.

Promptly at half past eight, the Dinsmores descended to the beautifully furnished dining-room of the fashionable hotel. Mr. Horace Dinsmore wore a

dinner suit fashioned by the best of tailors, which accentuated the manly lines of his physique; and Elsie was a perpetual feast to the eye, in her tasteful frock of white China silk. They were joined at dinner by Mr. and Mrs. Worthington and Miss Bixby, also elegantly dressed for the occasion.

"How do you do, Elsie?" greeted Miss Bixby. "I have not seen you since we left the train yesterday. Horace, how do you feel after our airplane ride?"

Mr. Dinsmore had one of *his* coughing spells; and Elsie's eyes widened in horror and fear, at the mention of the word "airplane." She began to tremble violently, shudder after shudder shaking her whole frame.

"Papa, Papa," she moaned, in low, agitated tones, "*did* you set out with characteristic heroism to try to fly the terrible Atlantic?"

"*Indeed*, no, my child," replied her father, striving to regain his composure. "Miss Bixby and I merely flew down to Havana for a light luncheon."

"Oh! Papa," Elsie sobbed, "you were in grave danger, and I did not know. I slept unfeelingly all the afternoon."

"I had no idea that you were so notionate about flying, my dear," he answered, a little indignantly. "If you *must* inquire into my actions, I shall tell you

precisely why I went in this fashion, without announcing my intentions. I learned on good authority that our friend Miss Bixby was determined to make the trip. As a sincere friend, I could not allow her to undertake such a hazardous feat with the protection of *only* the pilot. I was willing to sacrifice *myself* for the sake of friendship, but I saw no reason why my little daughter also should be worried. Can you not understand my consideration for you, and forgive my seeming heartlessness? "

"Papa, dear Papa, please do not talk of — of forgiveness from *me*," murmured Elsie brokenly; "I am your own little daughter, and I know that you are always brave, wise, and kind. Please forgive *me*."

"With all my heart," answered her father generously.

After that, the dinner hour passed happily enough. It was not a gay party, but filled with a subdued, quiet cheerfulness. Afterward, following a short discussion in undertones, our friends repaired to an establishment which Mr. Dinsmore had described to Elsie as a kind of club. Here they found many gallant, chivalrous men, refined, cultivated women, and charming young ladies, all of whom were playing games. Our Elsie was particularly interested in one game played with a large cage shaped like an hour-

glass, in which were cubes such as she had noticed in the hands of Uncle Ajax and Uncle Pompey.

"This must be a nice game," she remarked thoughtfully, "for Uncle Ajax and Uncle Pompey play with two such cubes; and I am sure that kinder and better-hearted darkeys than they do not exist."

"Stanley," said Mr. Horace Dinsmore, in quiet tones, "do you not think that Elsie seems a little pallid?"

"No," said Mr. Worthington, gazing at the little girl with admiration.

"You do *not?*" asked Mr. Dinsmore, frowning.

"Now that you speak of it," said Mr. Worthington hastily, "I *do* notice that she appears to be a trifle peaked."

"Oh! indeed, I am perfectly well," protested Elsie, her lip trembling. "I do not wish to mar anyone's pleasure."

"Think of your health first, daughter," said Mr. Dinsmore kindly. "I suggest that Mr. Worthington conduct you to the hotel, so that you may have a good rest tonight. The rest of us will promise for your sake not to give up our plans for the evening."

"Come, Horace," cried Miss Bixby gaily, "let us play Chemin de Fer upstairs."

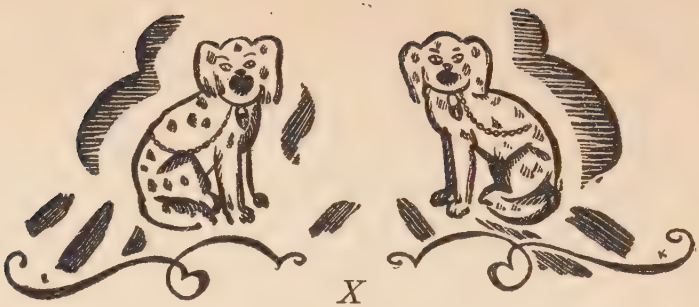
"Chemin de Fer?" said Elsie, who had travelled

widely and studied extensively. "That means 'railroad.' As a small child, I played a game which we little ones called Choo-choo, with chairs arranged in a line. Another game with chairs was called Going to Jerusalem, — although it really had nothing to do with the Holy Land. No doubt Chemin de Fer is similar to these games, is it not, Mr. Worthington? "

Mr. Worthington was unable to reply, having turned aside to sneeze.

"Yes, yes," said her father hurriedly, "but, my child, you are in no condition to play such strenuous games. Good night, Elsie, dear. Papa promises not to brood over your departure."

"Good night, good night to all," cried Elsie gallantly, as she took Mr. Worthington's arm, and turned her steps toward the hotel.



X

TRUTHFULNESS

Oh, Truth,
Thou art, whilst tenant in a noble breast,
A crown of crystal in an iv'ry chest.

ANON.

ONE evening, after the Dinsmores had returned to New York, a happy group sat gathered in their spacious library, — Elsie, her handsome father, Mr. Samuel Madding, who was very quiet, jolly Mr. Eugene Thigpen, and Mr. Travilla, who had brought Elsie a beautiful bouquet of flowers and some fine fruit from his hot-house.

The little girl bent her lovely head over her crocheting, her delicate white fingers moving with incredible ease and swiftness. She was making a crocheted purse of scarlet zephyr for dear black Mammy Chloe's birthday. After half an hour's pleasant and clever conversation, Mr. Dinsmore remarked, " What do you say to a little game, gentlemen? "

"The very thing!" exclaimed the three gentlemen, in unison.

"May I play games with you, Papa?" asked Elsie, preparing to lay aside the bright meshes of her fancy work. "I *do* hope that you intend to play Parchesi — though," she added, "people have been known to gamble over the Parchesi board, wagering all manner of articles and money on the outcome."

"No," said her father, decidedly, but not unkindly, "we are going to play cards."

"Authors?" she asked hopefully. "Or Five Hundred? Or perhaps Rook?"

"No," he replied forbiddingly. "You do not know this game."

"What is it called, Papa, dear?" asked the little girl with continued interest. "I should like to learn it, for there is no joy comparable to that of adding to one's store of knowledge."

"It hardly concerns one of your age and experience what it is called," answered her father reservedly. "Furthermore, are you not trying to finish the purse for Mammy Chloe?"

"Oh! yes, Papa," the child replied, "but I shall have completed it soon."

"When you are done with it, there will be time

enough to speak of playing." His tone was decisive indeed.

Elsie's fingers flew even faster at these words of her father's, but as she could crochet without looking at her work, she watched the preparations with curiosity and interest. The four gentlemen set up a card table, and while Mr. Travilla shuffled the cards, Mr. Dinsmore counted out four piles of little red, white and blue chips, which had been concealed in a box underneath the sofa. Mr. Thigpen and Mr. Madding watched the counting with deep concern.

"Oh! what a delightful game!" exclaimed Elsie in delight. "What is done with the patriotic wafers?"

"Those," explained Mr. Travilla, as he gave each of the players five cards, "are chips, which are used instead of a score pad. The losers forfeit as many of their chips as they have put into the centre of the table during the playing of a hand, and the winner takes them all. Thus at the end of the game, the player who has won most often will have the largest pile of chips. Gentlemen, this hand is Draw."

"I wish two cards," interpolated Mr. Dinsmore.

The other players followed Mr. Dinsmore's example, each discarding some of his cards and asking for as many more from Mr. Travilla. Then all began to place chips on the table in turn.

"Oh! everyone is losing," exclaimed Elsie in dismay. "But, dear Papa," she continued, looking over her father's shoulder, "you have such high cards, to be losing. There are not many of them, to be sure, but you would indeed win if you were playing Five Hundred. And it would be even better to be playing Authors, for you have several of a kind."

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Mr. Travilla in his robust way. "I presume that my two small pairs are worth little in this hand. I leave it to you, gentlemen."

"I shall silently steal away, too," laughed Mr. Thigpen, stroking his cheeks, which were very ruddy.

"I, too, am saved from ignominious defeat," remarked Mr. Madding with a quiet smile.

"Elsie!" exclaimed Mr. Horace Dinsmore angrily. "Can you not leave us in peace? You have cost me a great deal by your untoward remarks."

"Indeed, I am sorry, Papa," said Elsie contritely, a silent tear furrowing her fresh cheek. "I was *so* surprised that you were not winning with such a hand, and I could not refrain from saying so."

"You must learn control, daughter," said Mr. Dinsmore, still nettled, as he took the chips from the centre of the table and added them to his own stack.

"Deuces Wild," announced Mr. Thigpen, commencing to deal.

"Why, Mr. *Thigpen!*" exclaimed Elsie, blushing. "Such language!"

"That means only that the twos, which are spoken of as deuces, may be considered whatever one needs to make a good hand," explained Mr. Travilla hastily, as Mr. Thigpen colored. "No slang or profanity is intended in this case."

Elsie accepted the explanation with a gracious nod of her pretty head, but a frown of perplexity appeared between her brows. "But how can the twos be considered anything except twos?" she asked.

"This is a *game*," said her father in tones of vexation, "and we can *play* they are anything we wish. Now finish your purse."

Elsie felt deeply, bitterly disgraced and humiliated over her father's implied rebuke, and she bent her head over her crocheting to hide the dropping tears. And so for a little while, few words were spoken, except by the players. Little by little, however, Elsie's sorrow was replaced by filial pride and thankfulness, for as she glanced at the table from time to time she could see that her father's pile of chips was growing steadily larger. Her heart contracted with sympathy for the losers, yet she could not help rejoicing in her father's gains. Finally she

came to the end of her task of love, and laid aside the finished purse.

"Now I should like very much to learn to play the game," she said in her sweet way.

"Have you crocheted draw-strings for the purse?" asked her father sternly.

"I think that *ribbon* is more suitable, dear Papa," she replied hesitantly.

"*I* prefer crocheted strings," said Mr. Dinsmore shortly. "I hope that you will not be so indolent as to prefer the easier way."

"Oh, *no*, Papa," said the little girl, taking up her work again without a murmur. "I shall fashion the draw-strings as you suggest, for I know that you are always right."

But so quickly did the dainty fingers flash in and out among the skeins of gay floss that it was not long before she had finished the strings and attached them to the purse.

"Now I am ready, Papa," she said gaily.

"Have you lined the purse, Elsie?" asked her father, looking up from the table.

"No, Papa," she replied, shaking her curls. "Mammy Chloe prefers it unlined."

"Are you positive?" said Mr. Dinsmore. "Or is this some more of your shirking?"

"Oh, Papa," said Elsie in half-tremulous tones, "do not misjudge me; I am so anxious to do right. But it is really true that Mammy Chloe does not wish the purse to be lined."

"Do not judge the little girl too hardly," said Mr. Travilla with a placating smile.

"Very well," said Mr. Dinsmore, frowning. "But I do not wish her to enter the game at present. She *should* learn it eventually, but another day."

Elsie's face fell, but she contented herself with walking around the table to see all the hands. Mr. Madding, who was dealing, proposed "Spit in the Ocean."

"I trust that you did not really mean that, Mr. Madding," said Elsie with dignity.

"That means," explained Mr. Travilla with a twinkle in his eye, "that each player has four cards in his hand, and a fifth is placed face up in the centre of the table. This centre card, which is wild, is everyone's fifth card."

"Then, Mr. Thigpen," said Elsie enthusiastically, grasping the idea at once, "how fortunate that you have such excellent cards to use with the one in the centre. What shall you call it? An ace? "

The other three men laughed heartily.

"Do you not think, gentlemen," suggested Mr.

Mr. Madding, who was dealing, proposed "Spit in the Ocean." "I trust that you did not really mean that, Mr. Madding," said Elsie with dignity.

Thigpen, his forehead as rosy as his cheeks, "that it would be better to let Miss Elsie enter the game?"

Mr. Dinsmore seemed a trifle reluctant, but the others readily agreed; and Mr. Travilla outlined the principles of the game, while her father counted out a pile of chips for her.

"Thank you, dear Papa," said Elsie with eager appreciation, receiving the chips. "And thank you, Mr. Travilla, for your lucid explanations and apt illustrations, which make it very easy for me to learn."

And, indeed, she proved a credit to her instructor, for she was soon counting up her cards and placing chips on the table like a seasoned player.

When it came her turn to deal, she called, "Spit in the Sea and Deuces Wild."

"Why!" said Mr. Dinsmore severely, "at that rate no one will score. Why do you mix two different games?"

"Because, dear Papa," explained Elsie earnestly, "as dealer I have a better opportunity to win than the rest of you, and I wish to give *everyone* a chance to have an excellent set of cards."

"You misunderstand, daughter," her father elucidated, "the dealer has no better chance than the others."

"But, Papa," she said, abashed, "*you* always win when you are dealer."

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Mr. Travilla, slapping Mr. Dinsmore on the back. "Up to your old devices, Dinsmore?"

"What is this?" asked Mr. Thigpen in alarm. Mr. Madding counted his pile of chips carefully and frowned slightly.

"Let us try the game as Elsie suggests," said Mr. Dinsmore quickly. "Proceed with the dealing, daughter."

The cards were dealt, the hand played, and, sure enough, Elsie won.

"I like this game even better than Authors," she said in fine spirits. "Though not so instructive, it is similar."

It came Mr. Dinsmore's turn to deal, and he announced that it would be Draw. After each player had called for new cards, they began to pile chips into the centre of the table, each one raising the amount as his turn came. Mr. Thigpen's face lengthened, and he was forced to borrow more chips from the bank.

"I still have many more blue pieces to place on the table," said Elsie brightly, "and blue is my favorite color."

"Mine also," said Mr. Travilla regretfully, laying aside his cards, "but this is as far as I go."

"And I," said Mr. Thigpen, doing likewise. Mr. Madding shrugged quietly, and followed their example.

"Take it, Elsie," said Mr. Dinsmore gloomily. "My hand does not warrant further expenditure."

"Then I win!" exclaimed Elsie merrily. "It would be shamefully selfish of me to triumph in my success, but do see what an excellent hand I held!"

The three men stared at Elsie's cards, their eyes widening in astonishment.

"Oh, *is* it, *can* it be so?" said her father hoarsely, and he dropped his face into his hands and shuddered. "I had a better hand myself. You have only a king and two pairs,—queens and jacks."

"Is *that* all?" asked Mr. Thigpen in dismay.

"Who would have dreamed," said Mr. Madding meditatively, "that little Miss Elsie would have bluffed us out of a week's pay?"

Elsie was flushing and paling by turns. "Oh, Papa," she wailed, "what *shall* I do? I see that I have acted a lie. I thought that I had five queens!"

As her little frame shook with sobs, Mr. Travilla rose to leave, and handed a crisp bill to her. Mr.

Thigpen and Mr. Madding also rose and gave her several bills.

"Presents?" asked Elsie, her astonishment shining through her tears. "How very kind of you all! But one who has been so dishonest as I, even though it was unintentional, does not deserve gifts, and it is long past Christmas!"

XI

HOSPITALITY

How is the warm and loving heart requited,
In this harsh world, where it awhile must dwell;
Its best affections wronged, betrayed, and slighted —
Such is the doom of those who love too well.

L. E. L.

ONE afternoon, as our heroine mounted the steps of the Dinsmore mansion, after having lunched with Mrs. Stanley Worthington, she observed a young man lounging against a nearby post. Although on the whole she disapproved of loungers, something in the lad appealed to her kind heart.

"Can I do anything for you, my good man?" she asked in her courteous way, which made no distinctions in class, color, or occupation.

"Yes," he replied, with a bold, free air, "you can point out Mr. Horace Dinsmore to me."

"Ah," said Elsie, smiling, struck by the coinci-

dence, "you must mean my father. Can it be that you do not know him?"

"No," he answered, with a gleam of his small, keen black eye, "but I have been trying to meet him, to transact some urgent business with him."

"Such persistence always wins in the end," said Elsie, with admiration; "and I am sure that you will succeed. Indeed, he should be here within an hour or more."

"So much the better," said the youth, slapping his pockets and winking one eye.

"In the meanwhile, will you not join me at tea?" asked Elsie politely. "I am always delighted to entertain acquaintances of my father's, for they afford me an opportunity to display the social graces which his training has engendered in me."

The young man accepted her hospitable invitation with alacrity, and followed her into the house. He helped himself to a seat in the drawing-room, without waiting for an invitation, while Elsie gave orders for Uncle Pompey to fetch the tea.

As she took her seat, the little girl said hesitantly, "I fear that I do not know your designation, sir."

"Mr. Spriggs," he replied, placing his thumbs in the armholes of his checkered vest. "At your service."

"Thank you, Mr. Spriggs," said Elsie gratefully; "if I am ever in need of your services, I shall remember your kind offer. But let me introduce myself: I am little Elsie, the daughter and heiress of Mr. Horace Dinsmore."

For some moments, they sat in almost unbroken silence, which was at last interrupted by the advent of Uncle Pompey, bearing a small table and a tray of handsome china and viands.

Elsie played the part of hostess to perfection, presiding over the tea-urn with ease and grace, and pressing upon her guest the numerous dainties with which the table was laden. Although Mr. Spriggs appeared to enjoy the tiny sandwiches and tarts, she observed that he was not imbibing his tea.

"Perhaps, like my dear Papa, you would prefer a cordial," she suggested, well-schooled hostess that she had become.

"A *what?*" the young man asked, in astonishment. "Oh, well, anything you say. If a man like your father likes it, *I* can take a chance on it."

"It is quite good," Elsie assured him. "Papa always tells his guests that his cordials are harmless, before serving them."

The little girl jumped up and ran gracefully to a cabinet near by, from which she extracted two glasses

and a decanter. In order to make her guest feel thoroughly at ease, she poured a glassful for herself as well as one for him.

"That's more *like*," said Mr. Spriggs, smacking his lips as he drank the cordial at a gulp, and refilled his glass from the decanter. "A cordial, eh?"

"It *is* a delicious beverage, is it not, Mr. Spriggs?" said Elsie, with a smile both bright and sweet.

"Nice place you have here," said he, glancing about the room and experiencing the sense of comfort imparted by the handsome furniture, expensively bound books, costly paintings, statuary, tapestries, rare bric-à-brac, articles of vertu, rich carpet, soft couches, easy chairs and footstools.

"It is our *home*," said Elsie modestly.

"Just a nest, eh?" he said, parting his lips in a smile. "Well, when does your father come home to roost?"

At this moment, the door-bell pealed, and Mr. Spriggs sprang nervously to his feet.

"That is not Papa," said Elsie with assurance. "He does not ring when he enters the house."

As she spoke the words, her statement proved true, for it was a sweet-faced elderly woman who swept into the room.

"Aunt Wealthy Stanhope!" cried the little girl,

dancing to welcome her with outstretched hands. And, indeed, it *was* Aunt Wealthy, whose "stumbling tongue" had ever proved a source of kindly amusement.

"How is my little Elsie?" carolled the dear old lady, as she eyed the young man with interest. "I dropped in for a short call, but seeing that you have a visitor, I shall not stay."

"Oh, *do* stay to tea," urged Elsie cordially, for she was fond of invalids, babes, and old people. "This is Mr. Spriggs, who wishes to see Papa on important business. Mr. Spriggs, Miss Stanhope. Will you have lemon or cream, Aunt Wealthy?"

"What is in the *bottle*, Elsie?" asked her relative, adjusting her spectacles. "Do not tell me — just give me a glass of that, and I shall have off my bonnet and shawl for a nice chat."

While Elsie fetched a third glass, Aunt Wealthy made herself comfortable, and was soon nibbling at a dainty sandwich and sipping the beverage.

"Do not tell me what the important business is, children," she said, shaking her finger playfully at the two, as she finished her glass. "I may be old, but my eyes are bright. Elsie, you might give your old Aunty a little more of the cordial."

Elsie promptly refilled all three glasses, and Aunt

"When I come upon two young things killing and booing, I say to myself, 'There are two turtle-doves!'"

Wealthy continued in her silvery voice, "When I come upon two young things killing and booing, I say to myself, '*There* are two turtle-doves!'"

Mr. Spriggs laughed robustly, leaning back in his chair, as Elsie blushed painfully.

"But, Aunt Wealthy—" began the little girl.

"Not a word, child," interrupted the quaint little figure. "Do not tell Aunt Wealthy a *thing*. I know *just* how it is."

"He is not—" Elsie said, in confusion.

"No, my dear, he is not," agreed her aunt. "Your friend Mr. Vanilla is a better match, but youth, my dear, youth—" the old lady's voice trailed off as she took another sip of cordial.

"*Say!*" said Mr. Spriggs, in a disgusted tone.

"But, Aunt Wealthy, you do not understand—" broke in Elsie, scarlet with embarrassment and confusion.

"Now, child," said the old lady with mock sternness, "I may be, as I say, an old maid. But remember: the Bible says, 'It is not good for man to be alone,' and I hope, Mr. Twigs, that you will be all the happier for having a better-half."

"*Spriggs*, ma'am," said that gentleman, in some irritation. "But—"

"Sprigs, twigs, swigs—ah, Elsie, child, your old

Aunty could have been a poet." The aged voice shook with emotion. "A poet. I always said to your father — where is your father, Elsie?"

"He should be here shortly," replied the little girl in a trembling voice, glancing anxiously at the clock. "Please, Aunt Wealthy, let me explain."

"My dear, no explanations. Aunt Wealthy requires no explanations," said the dear old soul. "I always say, 'Do not put all your baskets into one egg.' And even though you have stolen a march on us, I say, 'Well, that is youth.' Youth, Elsie. That is youth. Never regret being young, child. Mark your old Aunty's words."

"Oh, dear," moaned Elsie, dropping a tear or two, "Mr. Spriggs is not a *friend* of mine, Aunt Wealthy."

"Friend? *No!*" said the old lady decidedly. "*Friend* is hardly the proper term. Am I not right, dear boy?"

Mr. Spriggs rose to his feet. "I have had about enough," he said peremptorily.

"So have I," agreed Aunt Wealthy cheerily. "Elsie, do not fill my glass again. I have had enough."

"*Please,* Aunt Wealthy," pleaded Elsie, about to indulge in a hearty cry. "Mr. Spriggs — "

"Ah, child," Miss Stanhope reassured them, polishing her spectacles as she spoke, "I shall say not a word to anyone — not a soul. Do not think that Aunt Wealthy can not keep a secret. But before I go, Elsie, I must say what I came to tell you about. I went to a dinner party, and Mr. Vanilla and his mother were there — "

"*Travilla*," corrected Elsie gently.

"Well, what does it matter? A large party, with travilla ice cream, turple soup, corn-pulling, and cigarettes and cigarars for everybody. And Miss Bixby, my dear, made eyes at Mr. Vanilla. I thought you might be interested, Elsie, but I suppose you do not care now. I once thought, Mr. Briggs, that Elsie and Mr. Vanilla — but — my dears, I *know* you will be happy. Aunt Wealthy is clairvoyant about these things. Now, do not say a word. I am going. Old Aunt Wealthy is going to leave you in peace. Good-bye, turple-doves! "

With these words, the dear old lady replaced her bonnet rear end foremost upon her head, and trotted out of the house, before anyone could speak. Elsie was suffused with crimson at the mention of Mr. Travilla's name in such a connection, for she still thought of him as her *father's* dear friend.

"What the — excuse me, miss," said Mr. Spriggs,

scratching his head. "With your kind permission, I am going before any more like that blow in."

Before he could find his hat and depart, however, Mr. Dinsmore's cheery voice sounded in the hallway. "Elsie!" he called in his fine, deep tones.

The child ran to meet him with outstretched arms, Mr. Spriggs following closely upon her heels.

"Oh, Papa," she said, in relieved accents, twining her arms affectionately about his neck, "Aunt Wealthy has been here, and has made a distressing mistake concerning Mr. Spriggs, who is waiting to see you on business."

"Are you Mr. Horace Dinsmore?" asked Mr. Spriggs in a business-like manner, stepping forward.

"I am," replied Mr. Dinsmore haughtily, waving Elsie aside.

"Well, I am pleased to meet you," said the young man, taking some papers from his pocket. "I have been trying for three weeks to serve a summons on you. Breach of promise suit. Ha! ha! 'Miss Eloise de la St.—'"

"Stay, give me the papers," said Mr. Dinsmore quickly.

XII

RIGHTEOUSNESS

Oh, thou child of many prayers!
Life hath quicksands — life hath snares!
LONGFELLOW'S *Bear a Lily in Thy Hand.*

ONE Sunday afternoon, Elsie sat, Bible in hand, reading aloud to her father and Mr. Travilla, her bell-like voice imparting new beauties to the holy lines she intoned. Mr. Travilla attended closely, a pucker of earnestness appearing on his brow, while Mr. Dinsmore, essentially a man of action, moved restlessly in his chair from time to time. He had recently passed through a trying period of financial stress and legal persecution, which had left its impress on his handsome features.

At length, when the little girl paused to allow her hearers to grasp the full meaning of the words she had uttered, her father spoke. "There, Elsie, that will do now," he said. "Go and get the book which

you were reading to me yesterday. I wish to hear the rest of it this afternoon, and I am sure that Travilla also will enjoy it."

Poor little Elsie! She rose to her feet, but stood uncertain. Her heart beat fast, her color came and went by turns, and tears came to her relief; for the book which her father bade her fetch was simply a fictitious moral tale, without a particle of religious truth in it, and, Elsie's conscience informed her, entirely unfit for Sabbath reading.

"Elsie!" exclaimed her father, in a tone of rebuke and astonishment. "Why do you hesitate? Do you not understand which book I mean?"

"Alas, yes, Papa," she murmured, almost under her breath.

"Why do you say 'Alas'? Go at once and get the book, as I bid you," he said, looking displeased. "Come, make haste."

But Elsie could not stir; she stood rooted, like a statue. "Oh, Papa!" she sobbed, "please do not ask me to read *that* book today."

"Daughter," he said sternly, "I do not *ask* you to read that book, I *command* you to do it, and what is more, *I intend to be obeyed*. Sit down at once and begin, and let me have no more of this perversity." From the fond, indulgent parent, Mr. Dinsmore

seemed suddenly to have changed to the cold, pitiless tyrant; and since love was as necessary to Elsie's health and happiness as sunshine to the flowers, so, even as the keen winds and biting frosts of winter wilt and wither the tender blossoms, did all this coldness and severity blight the gentle, sensitive spirit of the little child.

"Dear Papa," she said, in low, pleading, trembling tones, "I do not, *indeed* I do not want to be perverse and disobedient, but I can not break the Sabbath day."

Mr. Travilla then spoke in his kindly way, "Miss Elsie, I should say that you would be safe in leaving it to your father to decide such matters. Besides, if he *bids* you do thus and so, I think that all the responsibility of the wrong — supposing there *be* any —will rest with *him*."

"Oh! no, Mr. Travilla," replied the little girl quietly, "my Bible teaches me better than that —"

"Enough, enough," interrupted Mr. Dinsmore wearily. "Let us drop the subject. After all, Elsie's vocal chords are probably fatigued from reading aloud. Let us lay aside the book for the present, and pass the remainder of the afternoon in some other way. Let us pay a visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art."

At these words, Mr. Edward Travilla brightened perceptibly, and began to smile in anticipation.

"But, Papa," said Elsie gently, "a *pleasure* trip is quite as unsuitable for the Sabbath as a wordly book which contains nothing about God or being good."

"Did I speak of *pleasure?*" asked Mr. Dinsmore indignantly. "Travilla, did I mention the word pleasure? My purpose in taking you there, Elsie, is *instruction.*"

"Oh! Papa, dear, that is a sin, too," said the child earnestly.

"It is only a *little* sin," her father replied unswervingly. "I can not think that there would be much harm in it."

"Dear Papa," said Elsie, who was but an instrument in the hands of God, "do you not know that there is no such thing as a little sin? Do you not remember the story of the man who picked up sticks on the Sabbath?"

"Have you forgot that, Dinsmore?" asked Mr. Travilla jocosely.

"Daughter," said Mr. Dinsmore, ignoring Mr. Travilla's pleasantry, "are you again deigning to set up your opinion against that of your elders?"

"I do not mean to be saucy, Papa, indeed I do

not," she replied humbly, tears welling up in her sweet brown eyes. "I am only trying to do right — to be like the angels."

"I am sure that the little girl means no impudence," broke in Mr. Travilla in a conciliatory way.

"Perhaps not," said the child's father frigidly, "but she must learn that she can not dictate to me. No, cost what it may, I must subdue her."

Bitter, scalding tears rolled quickly down Elsie's burning cheeks. "Oh, Papa," she sobbed brokenly, "I only meant to help you and all of us to avoid temptation." No sooner had she spoken the words, than an understanding thought came to her, like a ray of light in a dark room; and a look of deep mortification came over her expressive face. "Oh, Papa," she said, in low, contrite tones, "I see it now. Oh, how foolish I have been, so to borrow trouble! For you are *not* attempting to force me to sin against the dictates of my conscience. I realize now that you meant to go to the Museum to view the *religious* subjects, of which there are so many fine examples."

"Of *course* I did," said her father, in an injured voice. "Why do you so woefully misjudge me?"

"Please excuse my willful misunderstanding," she pleaded, with meek submission. "I am so young, and always in the wrong."

"I will forgive you, but it must never, never be again," said her father resolutely. "And now let us make haste. Are you coming, Travilla?"

"Delighted," said that gentleman, whose kind heart rejoiced to see how the clouds of care and sorrow had all passed away from his little friend's face, leaving it bright and beaming, as usual.

It was not long afterward when our three friends were driving along Fifth Avenue, midst throngs of pleasure-seekers, for whom Elsie's heart was troubled. Lest she, too, commit the error of enjoying the Sabbath ride, the child repeated verses from the Scriptures all the way.

When they reached the Museum, they found the corridors crowded with other seekers after truth. Elsie caught sight of a familiar face across the great entrance hall. "Oh!" she exclaimed, with a pleased smile, "there is Miss Shirley Bixby!"

"Where? where?" asked her father, searching in vain with his eyes.

"I can see her no longer," said Elsie regretfully; "she has disappeared amidst the multitude. But let us lose no time in idling, dear Papa, when spiritual benefits await us at the head of yon stairway."

Followed by Mr. Travilla and her father, Elsie made haste to mount the stairs, looking neither to

right nor to left until she stood before Raphael's "La Madone de St. Antoine de Padoue." While she gazed in a rapture which no mortal tongue or pen could describe, her father commenced to pace slowly away. Engrossed though she was in the masterpiece, the little girl soon noticed his absence, and overtook him as he was about to descend the stairs.

"Oh! Papa," she cried, plucking his sleeve, "the paintings are all up here."

"Are they indeed?" he replied, in some confusion. "I was uncertain. I was looking for the indescribable 'Mars and Venus United by Love' of Veronese."

"But that is a *profane* picture, is it not, Papa?" she questioned gently, in a tone between inquiry and assertion.

"Perhaps so, perhaps so, but an excellent piece of work, and worthy of prolonged study," answered Mr. Dinsmore, glancing anxiously toward the stairway.

They returned to the galleries, and Elsie pointed out to him and to Mr. Travilla many examples of true religious feeling.

"Were it not the Sabbath," said she thoughtfully, "I should like to make notes on my tablets, that nothing might be forgot."

They returned to the galleries, and Elsie pointed out to him and to Mr. Travilla many examples of true religious feeling.

"Travilla," said Mr. Horace Dinsmore in a lowered tone, as Elsie moved away to admire other canvases, "do not miss seeing 'Springtime' and 'Venus and Adonis' in the next gallery. They are superb. In the meantime, I shall see you again later."

At that moment, the little girl called to him in her musical voice, "Papa, dear, do you recollect where the medieval paintings of biblical subjects are hung?"

"I should advise you to look for them yourself," her father answered with restraint, "so that on your next visit to the Museum you will remember their location."

"What an excellent idea!" she cried gratefully. "Dear Papa, you are always teaching me valuable lessons! It is small wonder that I am so far advanced above others of my own age."

As she set out in search of the paintings of which she had spoken, Mr. Travilla accompanied her, and Mr. Dinsmore strolled unobtrusively off in the opposite direction. When she had found the pictures, Elsie observed that her father was no longer with them.

"Mr. Travilla," she said, stifling a sob, "do you suppose that dear Papa is endangering his

chances for salvation by occupying himself with secular pictures? I know that such would not be his intention, but it is so easy to transgress by accident."

"I should not *worry* about him," answered Mr. Travilla, in a kindly voice.

"Wherever can he have gone?" she asked anxiously.

"Perhaps we had best not inquire," replied Mr. Travilla enigmatically.

Elsie blushed deeply, and found the different paintings a real study. The two sauntered through the galleries for some length of time, Elsie unconsciously revealing rich stores of varied information gathered from books, from the discourse of the wise and learned, and from her own keen, yet kindly, observations of men and things. Yet, as they proceeded, she never ceased looking for her father's well-known noble form.

After they had seen all the pictures suitable to the day, Mr. Travilla suggested that they examine the models of great temples on the main floor.

"Why, Mr. *Travilla!*" exclaimed Elsie in astonishment, dressed in the beautiful robe of perfect righteousness. "The temples of which the Museum possesses models, such as the Parthenon and the

Temple of Karnak, were built for the worship of *false* gods."

"True enough," said Mr. Travilla hastily, "but I was thinking in particular of the model of the Cathedral of Notre Dame."

"Oh, yes, Mr. Travilla," cried the little girl in merry, relieved tones. "We must indeed see that, for, though Papist, it is Christian."

They descended the stairs, and made their way through the crowd toward their destination.

"On *another* day, I should like to stop to view the reproductions of classical statuary," remarked the child, who was a student and critic of Art, "for although the originals were excuted by idolators, they were admirably done."

"Yes," agreed Mr. Travilla heartily. "But now let us see the beauties of the cathedral."

"What a noble pile!" breathed Elsie emotionally, gazing upon the miniature cathedral, and seeing in her mind's eye the perfection of the original. "Oh, I *do* hope that Papa will not miss this beautiful example of the builders' art!"

"Were he by your side, my child," remarked Mr. Travilla approvingly, "he would be proud to observe how his little daughter has profited by her studies."

"Oh, Mr. Travilla," said Elsie, blushing, "in truth, I know very little, for there is so much to learn."

So saying, she turned her attention once more to the cathedral model, and began to take a critical survey, although her heart was still anxious over her father's continued absence. While she was thus occupied, Mr. Travilla's ear was caught by the sound of "Ps-s-st!" Seeking the origin of the call, he discovered Mr. Horace Dinsmore peering out from within the model of the Pantheon. Realizing at once that his friend wished to speak to him, Mr. Travilla joined him quietly, saying nothing to Elsie.

"I shall come home later," said Mr. Dinsmore in confidential tones, motioning back Miss Shirley Bixby, who was looking over his shoulder. "You might tell Elsie that I have met by accident a friend who wishes my advice on several matters of spiritual importance."

XIII

SELFLESSNESS

She was the pride
Of her familiar sphere, the daily joy
Of all who on her gracefulness might gaze,
And in the light and music of her way
Have a companion's portion.

WILLIS.

"ELSIE, my child," said the little girl's father affectionately one evening, "is not the anniversary of your birth approaching?"

The child looked up into his face with an arch, sweet smile. "Yes, Papa, dear."

"Should you like to celebrate the occasion with a social function?" he suggested indulgently.

"Yes, Papa!" cried Elsie, clapping her hands. "I shall ask Aunt Chloe, Aunt Phillis, Uncle Pompey, and Uncle Ajax."

"My dear child," said Mr. Dinsmore in amuse-

ment, "why not ask young people of your own social class?"

"Oh!" said the child. "I do not recognize snobbish barriers, Papa, but if you like, I shall ask, instead, my four dearest girl companions, — Isabel Carleton, Caroline Howard, Lucy Carrington, and Mary Leslie. And *you*, of course, my own Papa."

Mr. Dinsmore cleared his throat. "I am not certain that I can be spared from my duties at the office," he said, shaking his head.

A look of keen disappointment passed over the countenance of the little girl, and tears sprang to her eyes. "Oh, Papa," she sobbed, "I could not enjoy a party without *you*. Cannot Mr. Pettiform take charge of your office?"

"Mr. Pettiform?" asked Mr. Dinsmore in perplexity. "Who is Mr. Pettiform, daughter?"

"Why, *Papa*," said Elsie, surprised, "your chief clerk, whom you call Pet."

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Dinsmore, flushing. "You mean *Pet*. Oh, yes, Pet. Ha! ha! At first I did not know whom you referred to. Well, well, let me put on my thinking cap, and see if I can not arrange to come to your party. Yes, my child, I believe I can do it."

"Is it a promise, dear, dear Papa?" begged Elsie.

"Yes, it is a promise," said her father consolingly. "While we are on the subject, child, should you like to invite also Miss Adelaide Conway?"

"I should, indeed, Papa," returned Elsie, looking very pleased once more, "but she is older than I, and I do not know her very well."

"Nor do I," he said regretfully, "but I fancy that she would prove a valuable addition to your circle of acquaintances. Since she and Mrs. Stanley Worthington are such intimate friends, why not ask them to come together?"

"That will be capital, Papa," said Elsie brightly. "I shall also invite Miss Shirley Bixby."

"Oh, no," replied her father quickly. "Miss Bixby and Miss Conway — ah — might not be friendly."

"Then, Papa," said the child earnestly, "I should take joy in inspiring a friendship between them."

"Now that I think of it," said Mr. Dinsmore gravely, "Miss Bixby is probably out of the city. In that case, it would be futile to try to reach her."

"As you say, Papa, though I should like to invite her," said Elsie, her face falling. Suddenly she cheered, saying excitedly, "Shall I invite Mr. Dilliton, whom I thought a fine, manly fellow?"

"That upstart?" said her father indignantly. "*No!*"

"I cannot think ill of Mr. Dilliton, for he seemed so genteel," said Elsie, surprised at her father's words.

"*I* can," he said firmly. "I forbid you to ask him to your little entertainment."

Elsie's joy was indeed damped, and she blushed painfully, for since the costume ball she had thought of Mr. Dilliton several times, in a delicate way.

"If you wish it, Papa," she said submissively, "I shall promise never to see him again."

"Have you been meeting that man without my knowledge?" Mr. Dinsmore inquired sternly.

"Oh, *no*, Papa," she said, shocked to the heart's core; "but he *was* very pleasant at the ball."

"There was no harm in *that*," he said, in a mollified tone, "but I do not wish to hear his name mentioned in connection with yours."

"May I ask Miss Bliss, my governess, to the party?" asked Elsie, changing the subject of conversation.

"Yes, yes," said her father, with little interest. "And now I give you permission to leave my presence."

The little girl glided quietly out of the room to lay her plans and issue her invitations.

At last the natal day dawned, and little Elsie engaged Mammy Chloe to steal softly into her father's room and take away the slippers which he usually wore, replacing them with a handsome pair which the child had just worked.

Before breakfast, as soon as she thought that her father was awake, the little girl tapped at his door.

"Come in," said he, "and tell me what fairy has been here, changing my old slippers to new ones."

"No fairy at all, Papa; but just dear old Mammy," she cried, springing into his arms with a merry, ringing laugh.

"Ah, but I know very well it was not Mammy Chloe's fingers that worked them," he said fondly. "Can it be that you have forgot whose birthday it is?"

"No, Papa," smiled the child, "but I could not bear to receive so many gifts without in turn presenting you with a slight token of my devotion."

Mr. Dinsmore patted her cheek. "And now see what Papa has for *you*," he said, opening a pretty little box that stood on his dressing table, and bringing to light a well-executed miniature of himself.

"Oh, how beautiful! Dear Papa, thank you very much," she exclaimed, delighted. "But —" the child

dropped her eyes to the carpet, "I am unworthy of it."

"You shall have it, at any rate," he replied, with an affectionate glance.

When the two, father and daughter, descended to the breakfast room, the entire household united in felicitations for this sweet unfolding life who had seen the light of day just fifteen years before.

"De Lawd bress you, darlin'," said Mammy Chloe, expressing the sentiments of the whole staff of servants. "De Lawd bress an' keep you, an' nebber let trouble come near you. You don' know nuffin' 'bout trouble, kase you's young, an' han'some, an' rich, an' good; an' Massa Horace, he dotes on you, honey; no, angel chile, *you* knows nuffin' 'bout trouble now, but ole Chloe does, kase she's ole, an' full ob aches an' pains."

"Yes, Mammy Chloe, and I am very sorry for you" — the little voice was very gentle — "but I, too, though I am but young in the school of adversity, know something of trouble, for many are the inflictions of the righteous."

"Come, Elsie," broke in her father, "eat your breakfast, and then we shall have a look at the presents which have been sent to you from far and wide."

After the slight repast, Elsie had the pleasure of

unwrapping and viewing the gifts, which had been piled up on the living-room table. She was the recipient of many costly tokens, including a tiny blue enamelled watch which she at once pinned to her dress, five large diamond rings, fifteen bouquets of lovely, sweet-scented blossoms, and Dr. Eliot's Five-Foot Shelf. Dear reader, can you not guess which of all these splendid gifts our Elsie most prized?

But as she gathered her presents about her, her youthful face was saddened by the realization of her own imperfections and unworthiness. "Oh, Papa," she said, as her father stood surveying the display with pride, "does it not make one humble to perceive the devotion which one has inspired in others?"

She soon recovered her spirits, however, and the morning flew away on swift wings. When the hour set for the party arrived, Elsie tripped down the stairs in her simple frock of white dotted Swiss with pink ribbons, which seemed to lend more than a faint tinge of color to her cheeks. She awaited her guests in the drawing-room with composure, her dainty hands folded in her lap.

Presently Uncle Pompey admitted a bevy of gay young girls, and a scene of joyous greeting ensued.

"Happy birthday! What gifts did you receive? *Do* let us see! What a beautiful dress! Who else is

coming?" they cried, all four crowding about their little hostess, in delighted, admiring chorus.

At this juncture, Mr. Dinsmore joined them. "Well! well!" he said cordially, greeting each in turn. "How are my young friends today?"

"Splendid!" they carolled, glancing with admiration at his handsome countenance.

"Do you not think my new dress becoming, Papa?" broke in Elsie, in her melodious tones.

"You conceited little puss," Mr. Dinsmore said, indulging in a little jest, as he pinched her cheek lightly.

"Oh, Papa," she explained, blushing, "I did not *mean* to appear conceited, but only to compliment your excellent and unfailing taste in choosing my apparel."

"That is rather strong, is it not?" laughed her father. "Now, how are you young people going to amuse yourselves? As Elsie is musically inclined, she might favor you with the accompaniment for 'Going to Jerusalem.' Or shall you play 'Button, button'?"

"Oh, *no*, Mr. Dinsmore," cried Lucy Carrington, in disdain, "Isabel has promised to tell us of her new beau, who I hear is quite a blade."

Elsie was inexpressibly shocked that such topics should be discussed by young ladies of her own age.

"Oh, Lucy! Oh, Isabel!" in an awed, frightened tone, was all that she could say.

Fortunately, all minds were shortly diverted by the entrance of Mrs. Worthington and Miss Adelaide Conway. Both Mr. Dinsmore and Elsie hastened to welcome the newcomers cordially, and the chatter of the little ladies was momentarily hushed. When the introductions were over, Mr. Dinsmore gallantly handed Miss Conway to a seat on the sofa, and took his place beside her.

Mrs. Worthington was at once admitted into the circle of young people, who hung upon her smiles, as she skillfully guided the conversation into channels suitable to their ages. The vivacious group made a charming picture, indeed.

The next arrival was Miss Bliss, whom Elsie greeted with a warm embrace. The child led her governess to the sofa where her father and Miss Conway were seated.

"Ah!" said Mr. Dinsmore, rising, "so kind of you, Miss Bliss, to forsake your pedagogical pursuits to attend my little girl's birthday party."

"Not at all, Mr. Dinsmore, not at all," she assured him. "I welcome an opportunity of meeting my young charge in a social way, and not as her preceptress."

Mr. Dinsmore glanced uneasily at Miss Conway, and shifted his weight to the other foot. "Very kind of you, I am sure," he murmured.

"Elsie is very proficient in reading," continued Miss Bliss, "and I wonder if you wish her to begin algebra. Though, of course, she will hardly need algebra in later life." She smiled, averting her gaze slightly, as a pink flush came over her face.

"I dare say," he replied perfunctorily.

Elsie, her fair face suffused with blushes at finding herself the subject of the discourse, sat down beside Miss Conway in her courteous way.

"Do you not find Papa an inspiring conversationalist?" she asked, with filial pride.

"Quite," replied the young lady, with an amused look. "And so, I perceive, does Miss Bliss. Shall we leave them together, and join Mrs. Worthington and the girls?"

They rose, and made their way across the room toward the animated group. "You are an amusing child," said Miss Conway, taking a seat; "and I am sure that we shall be friends, for I find your father a polished gentleman and extremely handsome."

At this moment, Miss Shirley Bixby appeared in the doorway, glancing about in dismay. "Oh!" she

cried, as Elsie ran to meet her, "I *do* hope that I am not intruding!"

"Indeed, *no*, Miss Bixby," said Elsie warmly. "I *wanted* you to come to my party, but I feared that you were out of the city, as Papa suggested."

"Why! what gave you such an idea? I have not left town since my trip to Florida," said Miss Bixby, glancing speculatively at Mr. Dinsmore, as she kissed the rosy cheek of the little girl. "Ah, there is Horace now — I wish to speak to him."

Mr. Dinsmore paused in his conversation with Miss Bliss, and bowed, casting an apprehensive look in the direction of Miss Conway. Then, flushing slightly, he devoted his attention to the governess with great interest.

"How do you do, Mrs. Worthington?" said Miss Bixby, approaching the other guests. "What dear young girls! And Adelaide Conway! How are you, my dear?"

As she spoke, her countenance belied her friendly words, and her manner became cooler. She turned to the little daughter of the house. "Come, Elsie," she said affectionately, "let us sit down and have a pleasant chat."

"Thank you, Miss Bixby," said Elsie, who never forgot her manners, "but *Miss Conway* and I

were discoursing as you arrived. Will you not join us? "

Miss Bixby frowned slightly as they took their places, Elsie sitting between the two young ladies.

"*Do* continue your remarks, Miss Conway," said Elsie politely.

Miss Conway smiled. "I was saying, dear child, that I am sure that we shall be warm friends."

Elsie flashed a smile at the speaker; as she did so, Miss Bixby leaned forward to meet Miss Conway's eye. "Elsie and *I* have been close friends for some time," she said.

"Indeed? " said Miss Conway coldly.

Miss Bixby blushed prettily. "I have always been *very* fond of Elsie," she said firmly, placing a slight emphasis on the child's name. Our little heroine's eyes grew misty with glad tears over this protestation.

Miss Conway seized Elsie's hand and clasped it. "We have only recently become acquainted, Elsie," she said, with a look at Miss Bixby, "but I think that we shall become warm friends in the near future."

"I am sure that I can echo and reëcho your words, Miss Conway," replied Elsie, who valued friendships highly.

Presently all eyes were turned upon the door, where Uncle Pompey entered, bearing aloft the

mammoth birthday cake. Sixteen miniature candles glowed, revealing a design of lilies executed in white, yellow and green icing, and "Elsie" in pink lettering.

"Ah!" came from every throat in delighted exclamation, while Elsie was enraptured, her eyes fairly dancing with pleasure. The cake was set before her upon a small table placed there for the purpose, and she cut a slice for each guest, not forgetting the beloved black servants. At the same time, the ice cream was served, each portion also moulded in the representation of a lily.

There was quite a little buzz all over the room as the chatter grew livelier; and Elsie continued to rejoice in the company of the two young ladies, who seemed to vie with one another in winning the child's attention.

There was a momentary hush, however, during which Miss Bliss's voice was heard saying, "What I mean, Mr. Dinsmore, is that Elsie really needs a mother's care."

Mr. Horace Dinsmore's face flushed with earnestness, and he glanced more than once in the direction of Miss Conway and Miss Bixby.

After a time, Elsie's four little mates rose to take their departure, avowing that a pleasanter occasion could not have been conceived. In the meanwhile,

Mrs. Worthington joined Miss Conway and Miss Bixby, while Elsie was seeing her guests to the door.

"Have you two had a nice visit?" she asked, in her sweet way. "Shall we go now, Adelaide?"

Miss Adelaide Conway rose, glancing at Miss Bixby. "I suppose we may as well," she said.

Mr. Dinsmore sprang from the sofa where he had been sitting, and reached them at a bound. "It is yet early," he protested. "Do not leave."

"Oh, we must *all* be going, Horace," said Miss Bixby, rising hastily. "So nice of you and Elsie to wish me to come to the party," she added significantly.

Mr. Dinsmore was still flushed when the ladies departed with cheery adieux. "Good-bye! good-bye! *Such* a delightful party, Elsie. Good-bye!"

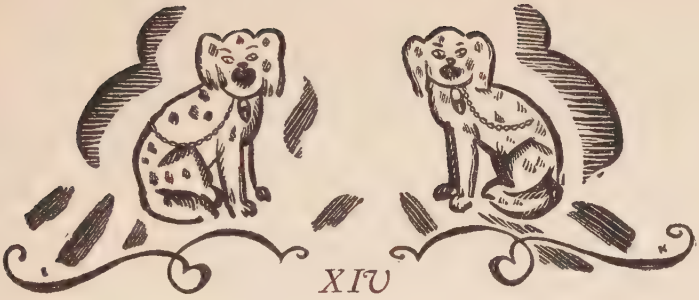
Miss Bliss lingered, for she had not yet touched upon the subjects of Elsie's exemplary behavior and high standards of conduct. When at length she left, it was with genuine reluctance that the child bade her good-bye, for she had found the conversation interesting, indeed.

Then an expression of unutterable relief and thankfulness came over Mr. Horace Dinsmore's face, though his stalwart shoulders sagged.

"What an enjoyable party, dear Papa," said

Elsie, with a half-breathed sigh of heart-felt happiness. "I am *so* glad that Miss Bixby came after all; and she and Miss Conway did, in truth, become warm friends, through my efforts. I am content to have done so kind a deed on my birthday, dear Papa."

"Quite so, daughter," said her father wearily, pouring himself a cordial from the cabinet nearby.



XIV

EPILOGUE

Before me, even as behind,
God is, and all is well.

WHITTIER.

For blessings ever wait on virtuous deeds,
And though a late, a sure reward succeeds.

CONGREVE.

AND now, with this happy anniversary of the birth of the sweet floweret, who had blossomed into this world of sin and sorrow just fifteen years before, bringing joy to all hearts, let us leave our little heroine, older and wiser than when we first met her, though no less pure, innocent, and devout.

We may be sure that whatever betide, whatever the future may hold in store for Elsie and her distinguished-looking father, they will always abide

steadfastly by the principles which have guided their faltering steps in the past.

As for kind Mr. Travilla, can you not guess, dear reader, that it will not be long ere he speaks of the emotion already budding in his good heart?